

# The Southend-on-Sea Housing Strategy 2011-21



## Contents

	<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>About this document .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	The relationship between the Housing Strategy and other local strategies .....	4
1.2	Stakeholders .....	6
1.3	Vision Statement .....	7
1.4	Financial Climate .....	7
<b>2</b>	<b>Current Situation- Review and Gaps .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1	Context .....	9
2.2	Our Achievements .....	9
2.3	Population .....	10
2.4	Housing Need.....	12
<b>3</b>	<b>New Homes .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	New Housing Delivery .....	15
3.2	Affordability .....	16
3.3	LIP (Local Investment Plan) .....	18
3.4	Investment in Affordable Housing.....	19
3.5	Core Strategy Information .....	21
3.6	Development Control Information .....	22
<b>4</b>	<b>Existing Stock .....</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1	Social Housing incl. Council Owned Stock .....	24
4.2	Private Sector Renewal .....	26
<b>5</b>	<b>Access to housing .....</b>	<b>30</b>
5.1	Allocations Policy.....	30
5.2	Homeless Prevention .....	30
5.3	Welfare Reforms.....	31
5.4	Vulnerable Adults/Specialist Accommodation .....	32
<b>6</b>	<b>Action Plan .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>41</b>
7.1	Appendix 1: Stakeholder lists .....	41
7.2	Appendix 2: Consultation Activity Information .....	42

## Foreword

I am proud as the Cabinet member with responsibility for housing to be able to present the new Housing Strategy for Southend-on-Sea and equally proud that the housing policies contained within it will have a positive impact on the residents of the town. High quality housing is essential for all our residents including children and families, vulnerable adults and older people

The three year period of the preceding Housing Strategy 2008-11 have proved exceptionally challenging for the housing market across the UK and within Southend. Following the global financial crisis house prices have fallen and sales activity has reduced drastically with access to mortgage finance becoming increasingly difficult for many. These market difficulties have been coupled with a reduction in the amount of public money available to invest in housing provision. In spite of these challenges Southend has been able to deliver some remarkable successes in terms of improving housing provision in the town. There has been large scale investment in the council's own stock, delivery of new affordable homes, improvement of standards in the private rented sector and continuing success in catering for the needs of the most vulnerable.

Whilst there has been progress in improving housing provision there remains much work to do. All of which is set within a within a climate of wide ranging changes to National housing policy. As demonstrated during the consultation on preparing this strategy these changes present a challenge to the status quo but also present opportunities for the Council, its partners and the community to approach things in new and innovative ways.

I believe it is important that even though the challenges we face are great, that we have a duty to maintain high aspirations for the future. As such the three major aims of the strategy outline the commitment to real achievable progress; to prioritise delivery of new quality affordable homes, to facilitate the improvement of the existing stock and to meet the needs of vulnerable applicants of all ages; children and older persons.

This strategy can only be delivered in partnership and will if successfully implemented help to improve the lives of Southend residents now and in the future.

*Lesley Salter*

Cllr Lesley Salter

Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

## 1 About this document

Under the Local Government Act 2003, every Local Authority must produce a comprehensive Housing Strategy. This sets out the vision for housing in the town for the period 2011-2021 and the way in which an authority will meet its local housing needs. This vision, and the policies that underpin it, form the framework for determining the priorities for Southend's public housing investment.

This aligns closely with the overall vision for Southend on Sea set out in the Community Plan, Local Investment Plan and the Local Development Framework and allows for a longer-term ambition of what housing provision should be in Southend in ten years time.

However, this document is not simply a housing investment strategy; it goes beyond this, outlining policies and actions required on a number of key housing issues where housing provision is key to improving the lives of the residents of Southend and the town in which they live.

We will explore the concept of affordability and explain housing specific terminology "jargon" to ensure all stakeholders understand what is trying to be achieved.

### 1.1 The relationship between the Housing Strategy and other local strategies

The Core Strategy<sup>1</sup>, Local Investment Plan<sup>2</sup> and Community Plan<sup>3</sup> set out the overall vision and approach to the regeneration and development of Southend. We have taken this strategic context with regard to housing and established aims that have significant potential to contribute towards regeneration and growth and propose that they will shape public sector interventions during this Comprehensive Spending Review period and beyond.

The Southend Together Partnership is made up of the Borough's leading public, private, voluntary and community organisations, which reflect the richness and diversity of the borough. These partners provide an in depth knowledge of our communities, our economy, the town's strengths and its areas for improvement. The Southend Together Partnership is extremely proud of Southend and is determined to ensure our town is a thriving, dynamic place that celebrates and enriches our community both now and into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Core Strategy LDF [http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/230/core\\_strategy](http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/230/core_strategy)

<sup>2</sup> Southend Local Investment Plan <http://minutes.southend.gov.uk/akssouthend/images/att18799.doc>

<sup>3</sup> Southend on Sea Community Plan <http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/51/partnerships>

The Partnership has brought this knowledge together into the Community Plan 2010-20 which has identified four ambitions for the town; Developing the local economy, Supporting local health and wellbeing, Local community safety and Building strong, proud and empowered communities. The three delivery groups monitor these ambitions and have the responsibility for growth.



**Fig 1.** Structure of Local Strategic Partnership- ‘Southend Together’

As an organisation Southend on Sea Borough Council has recognised the importance of housing in *Creating a better Southend*<sup>4</sup> this is explicitly declared in the priority to ‘Enable well-planned quality housing and developments that meet the needs of Southend’s residents and businesses’ as well as playing a supportive role in the majority of other Corporate priorities.

It is proposed that a modular approach is taken, with the Housing Strategy acting as a top-level parent document outlining strategic objectives with detail included in the sub-strategies concerning specific areas of the housing market in Southend-on-Sea; Homeless Prevention, Private Sector Renewal. In addition to reducing bureaucracy and creating a leaner Strategic Framework the Older Peoples’ Accommodation and Support Needs Strategy 2008-11 and the Supporting People strategy will no longer continue to be produced in a stand-alone form.

<sup>4</sup> Southend on Sea Borough Council Corporate Plan  
[http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/64/council\\_policies\\_and\\_plans](http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/64/council_policies_and_plans)



Fig 2. Diagram illustrating the themes of the Housing Strategy and how they interact with existing strategies

## 1.2 Stakeholders

A strong Strategy framework can only be achieved in partnership with its stakeholders both internally and externally. This is true of both ensuring the contents, aims and priorities are correct and in achieving its outcomes. During the consultation phase of this document identification and involvement of these stakeholders was essential and together with specific events, consultation has been undertaken at existing forums to reach a wide range of organisations and residents. The broad groups involved are listed below with more detail and the communication plan in *Appendix 1*.

- Residents
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector
- Health
- Housing Providers
- Private Sector
- Public Sector
- Elected Representatives
- HCA
- Thames Gateway South Essex partnership

This period of consultation helped shape the thinking around the priorities and that the document should focus around need and delivery together with their appropriate targets. Stakeholders were also of the opinion that the strategy document should be concise and to the point. Further information and feedback from the consultation is available in *Appendix 2*.

### How are partners encouraged to deliver aims?

As a valued partners in the consultation process and by endorsing the targets and working together

## 1.3 Vision Statement

*‘Ensure housing in the Borough meets the diverse needs of our local communities and contribute towards creating a place where people want to live’*

A sustainable balanced community requires well-planned quality housing and developments that meet the needs of its current and future residents. This must include a range of tenure and sizes of dwelling located across the area, but within areas well served by public transport and wider supporting infrastructure.

The three Strategic Aims below represent the key priority housing themes in Southend and are expanded upon later in this document with focus on how partner agencies can contribute towards their realisation.

- Aim 1.** Promote the delivery of quality housing, including affordable, to meet local needs and promote a sustainable and balanced housing market.
- Aim 2.** Promote the improvement in the quality of the existing housing stock achieving Decent, Healthy & Environmentally Sustainable homes across all tenures.
- Aim 3.** Promoting greater accessibility to different types of housing and promoting independent living for vulnerable groups and continuing work to prevent homelessness.

To deliver these objectives an Action Plan will be set out for an initial two year period to enable a more flexible approach in light of a fast changing economic, political and legislative environment. This will enable a formal review of progress in 2013 and production of a new two-year action plan to continue progress towards the 2021 vision.

## 1.4 Financial Climate

It is clear that the fiscal constraints outlined in the Comprehensive Spending Review (October 2010) coupled with general uncertainty in the economy will put a strain on resources available for delivery. Whilst the strategy will remain ambitious it will be important to remain realistic and identify resources required to deliver objectives in an environment when value for money and achieving more with less will be prevalent. In order to preserve service levels, Local Authorities and housing providers may be required to explore new forms of service delivery- shared services.

A 50% reduction in capital funding for new affordable housing, wide-ranging changes to the Welfare/Housing Benefit system, reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and reduction in overall revenue allocations to Local Authorities are amongst the key areas which will affect housing provision.

However, opportunities still exist and in addition to funding for the new affordable rent tenure there are also a number of other areas where additional funding has been allocated;

- Mortgage Rescue Scheme,
- Homelessness Change Programme,
- Traveller Pitch Funding
- Empty Homes.
- New Homes Bonus

The Green Deal potentially offers a new method for homeowners to access finance to improve the energy efficiency of their accommodation.

This vision will be the basis of our aspirations and action plan however the initial two years will allow an embedding and understanding of the effects of the changes recently introduced as well as those due by 2013. Following this a more defined and ambitious action plan will be achievable.



## 2 Current Situation- Review and Gaps

### 2.1 Context

Any strategy needs to be based on robust information and this Strategy is underpinned by housing needs and housing market data from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and locally through Housing Register management information, Local Development Framework (LDF) information; Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), stock condition surveys and Supporting People needs analysis and the Local Investment Plan.

With the removal of regional policy and focus on locally made decisions the need to understand the market in Southend is imperative to inform commissioning that meets local needs. Where this information is not currently available or is not in a robust format this will be highlighted as a key action for the Strategy.

### 2.2 Our Achievements

Over the period of the last Housing Strategy between 2008-11 there have been a number of notable achievements. These include

- The successful introduction of “On the Move” SBC’s Choice based lettings system which has simplified the allocation process and given greater choice to those households on the homeseekers register.
- South Essex Homes achieving two star Audit Commission inspection, unlocking £57.8 million investment programme to work towards Decent Homes Standard.
- The introduction of a Rent Deposit Loan Scheme allowing households to rent in the private sector and reduce pressures on the housing register.

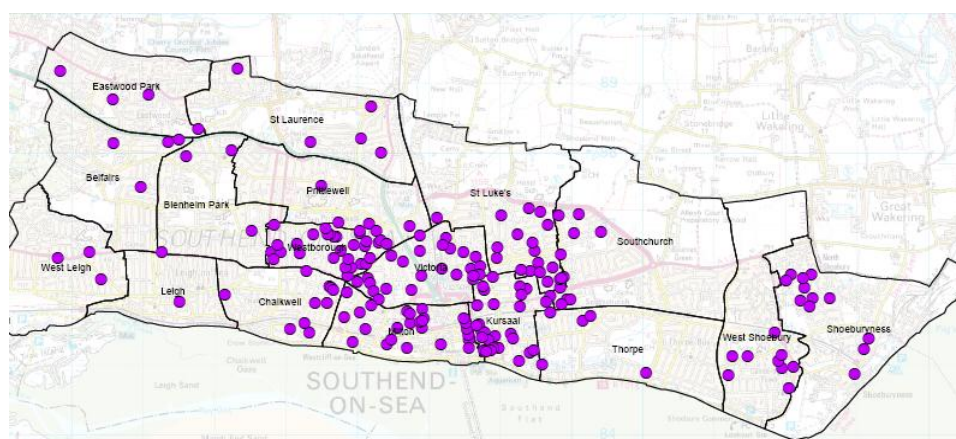


Fig 3: Location of Rent Deposit Units across the Borough

- Improved Energy Efficient properties in the Private Sector in partnership with Warm Front as well as successful use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders that have brought long-term empty properties back into use.
- The identification of council owned land to bring forward additional affordable housing in partnership with a Registered Provider as well as working closely with our planning department to ensure all Section 106 contributions are maximised.
- All adapted properties which become vacant are matched with households requesting adaptations. In addition we have been pro-active in requesting adapted accommodation within development on council owned land.
- Improvements in service Quality in SP funded services and the introduction of the CBL system saw a 50% increase in numbers entering short-term SP funded support service between 2008/9 to 2009/10.
- Expansion of floating support services has helped vulnerable people remain in their own homes and reduced the numbers of individuals entering the homelessness cycle.
- 11 newly joint commissioned services has meant 250 more vulnerable adults can be supported at any one time (offenders, women's refuge, Learning Disability services, homelessness services and substance misuse).

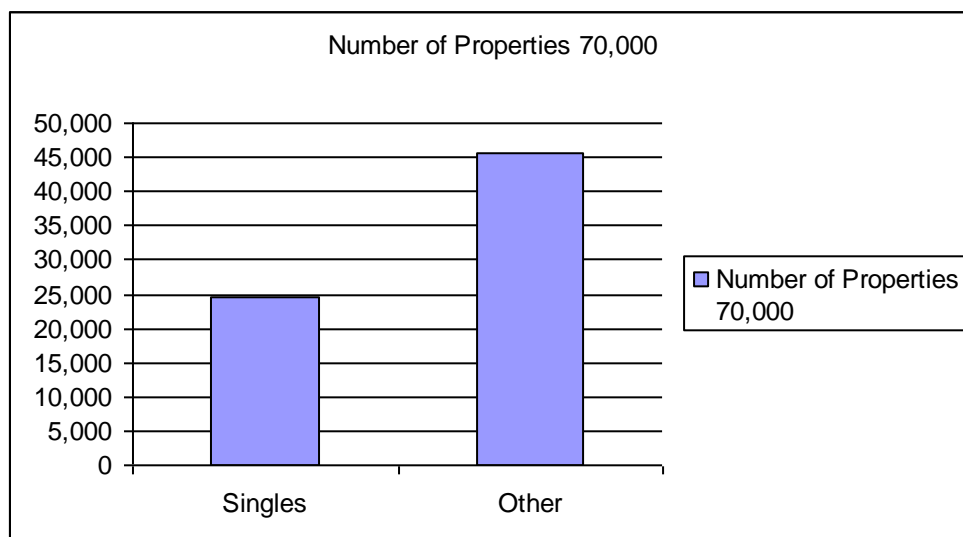
## 2.3 Population

Southend on Sea is located on the north side of the Thames Estuary approximately 40 miles east of London. It is 16.1 square miles in size and its 5,500 businesses generate more than £2.5 billion of economic output.

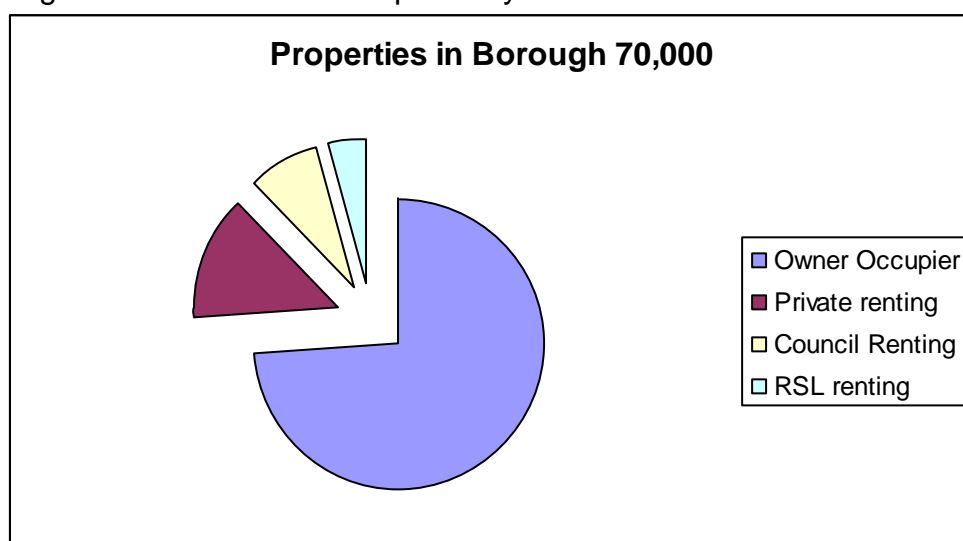
In addition to being a residential and business hub in its own right, Southend is an integral economic component of the Thames Gateway regeneration area, and has strong economic links with London, which is within easy commuting distance.

In June 2010 the Office of National Statistics released the 2009 mid year population estimates that show the number of people living in Southend has increased to 164,200, occupying over 70,000 properties.

Over a third of households (35%) are single person against 28% in the East of England. Our average household is 2.22 persons, slightly lower than the East of England average of 2.37 persons.



73% were owner occupied in line with the East of England average however the percentage of households renting from a private landlord was 14% compared to 11% in the East of England with the public sector both Council (8%) and Registered Social Landlords (4%) being lower than the East of England with 12% & 5% respectively.



The population of Southend on Sea is set to increase over the next 5 years by 1.2%, while the 65 and over age group is predicted to increase by 10%. The proportion of the population aged 15 and under will decrease by 1% and there will also be a 5% reduction in the number of 55-64 year olds compared to the mid 2007 estimates. Proportions of Black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) communities in Southend have increased in recent years with a rise in BME groups from 7.2 percent to 10.3 percent since 2001<sup>5</sup>. From the information sources available, population increases in these communities appear highest among school age children.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Resident population estimates by ethnic group (percentages) 2001 and 2006 NeSS, Neighbourhood Statistics

<sup>6</sup> Southend Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2009

An ageing population suggests that there will be greater demand on health services in the future, particularly in providing care for patients with long term conditions and dementia. End of life care will also become increasingly important. Southend also has a significantly higher birth rate compared to the national average figure of 60.22 at 67.43.

Community make-up differs across the borough. Some areas will have relatively high populations of older people compared to other areas and some areas will have higher populations of BAME communities than others in the town.

## 2.4 Housing Need

Estimating current and future housing need in the town is a key aspect in determining the shape of future housing supply. At present needs information is derived from a number of sources and it is important that this information is as accurate as possible and readily available to all. Developers to justify investment decisions, planners to ensure that development is managed in response to local needs and commissioners of specialist services to ensure the needs of specific client groups are met, use it.

Current sources include housing waiting list information, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and analysis of market information. As well as broad figures showing borough wide need, more detailed thematic information outlining needs based on tenure requirement, affordability, specialist needs (adapted, supported), age and location (at ward/neighbourhood level) is required.

It is essential to the general well being of our communities that the need analysis is as robust as we can make it. Housing is important to us all and households may feel their needs are not recognised or are being ignored. The Council's Allocation Policy explains the process used by the Council to identify need and prioritise allocation of the small supply of housing available to us. In all sectors of the community and across all tenures there will be a compromise between our aspirations or what we would like to have and the need which can be met.

### Housing Supply/Demand

In common with the wider South East of England demand for affordable housing in Southend far outstrips current supply. With a sizeable reduction in direct capital subsidy to support building of new affordable housing there is a real risk that this situation will continue over the term of this Strategy. Section 3 (below) provides greater detail on how we will respond to the challenge of providing new homes within new financial realities.

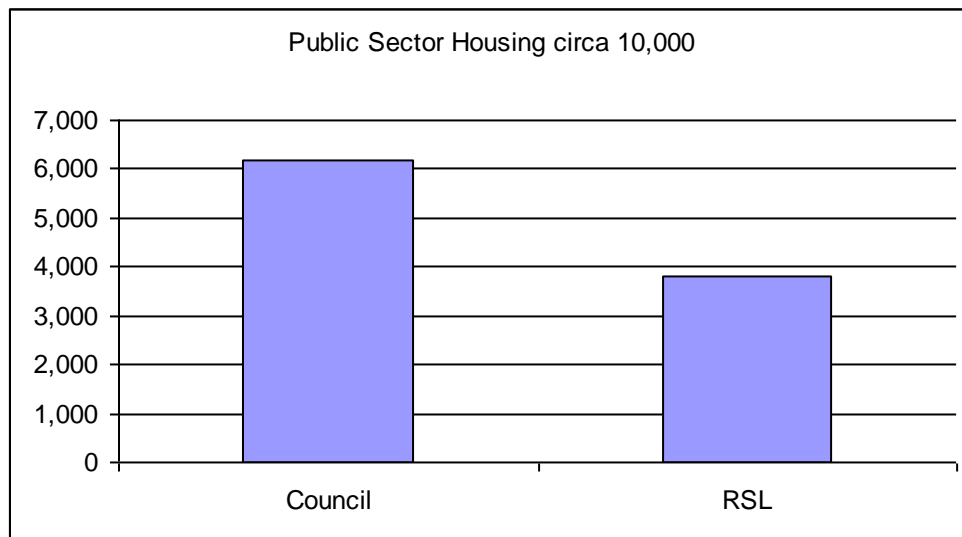
The Thames Gateway Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010 <sup>7</sup>(TGSE SHMA) identified that Southend needs 430 units of new affordable housing

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<sup>7</sup> Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2010 Update  
[http://www.tgessex.co.uk/index.php/tgse\\_sections/housing](http://www.tgessex.co.uk/index.php/tgse_sections/housing)

per annum to satisfy the need on the waiting lists which is 132% of the total annual housing target as set out in the Core Strategy.

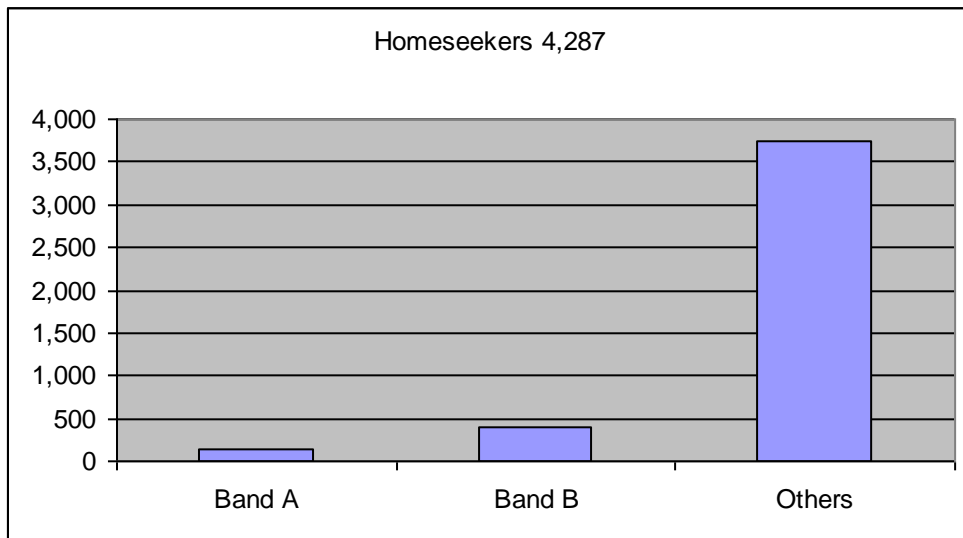
As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 there were over 10,000 units of affordable housing in the borough with approximately 62% being owned by the council. The remaining units are owned or managed by more than 30 providers. Any initiatives or interventions to increase the affordable house stock will need to be in partnership with these providers, developers as well as the various vulnerable adult groups.



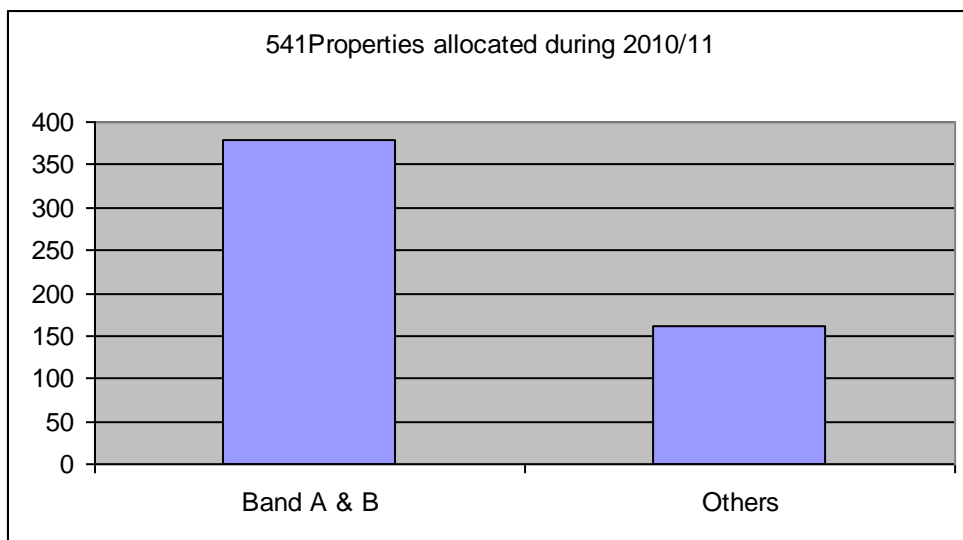
### The Homeseekers' Register

The Homeseekers' Register provides useful information on the number of households who have registered an interest in entering social housing. However, because it only shows aspiration to one tenure (social housing) this does limit the scope of the information in demonstrating overall housing need. It is also necessary to consider that not all of those on the Homeseekers' Register are considered in Housing Need. In accordance with the Localism Bill and subsequent review of the Allocations Policy there is a possibility that only those in Housing Need will be permitted onto the Homeseekers' Register.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 there were 4287 households on the homeseekers register of these 2505 are deemed to have no or low housing need, whilst 537 households (12.5%) are in priority bands A & B (146 & 391 respectively)



During the 2010/11 financial year a total of 60,415 bids were received for advertised properties from which there were 541 lets with 418 (77%) via South Essex Homes. 379 (70%) units went to households in priority bands A & B, a further 122 (23%) to Band C and the remaining 40 units (7%) to those with no or low housing need.



**Overarching Aim**

**An overarching aim of this strategy is to review and improve the needs analysis produced/available to meet the needs of all local stakeholders to improve investment and commissioning decisions.**

### 3 New Homes

#### Strategic Aim 1

***‘Delivering quality affordable housing to meet local needs and helping to promote a sustainable and balanced housing market’***

#### 3.1 New Housing Delivery

As identified in Section 2 the borough has a requirement for 430 new affordable properties per annum against a net new build target of 355 per annum. Even if our housing targets are achieved we would not be meeting identified need. In order to go some way to mitigating this, alternative options will be investigated to bring additional housing forward.

Year	S106	Non 106
2008/09	49 (66%)	20 (17%)
2009/10	25 (34%)	96 (83%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>74 (39%)</b>	<b>116 (61%)</b>

**Fig 5** Number of affordable housing units delivered 2008/09 & 2009/10 whether delivered through planning gains (s106)

Over the past two years the role of non s106 affordable housing delivery has become increasingly important as the above table shows the majority of new affordable units delivered in 2008/09 were as a result of planning obligations (66%). This number fell sharply in 2009/10 but was boosted by affordable housing delivered outside of planning obligations through direct grant subsidy (83%).

One of these options will be the regeneration of Council owned land and stock. A number of small sites are already being brought forward and although there will always be more priority uses than land available, housing will continue to be considered.

Land is in short supply as in Southend, good design is fundamental to using land efficiently and the density of new developments should be carefully considered. Neighbourhoods are more successful when they avoid large concentrations of housing of the same type. A good mix of housing types and sizes is important in creating a basis for a balanced community. However when well designed and built in the right location, a more intensive development can enhance the character and quality of an area.

The New homes bonus has been introduced as an incentive to encourage development of new properties and bring empty properties back into use.

Whilst the New Homes Bonus is not intended to encourage development that would be inappropriate in planning terms, it is envisaged that it can be used to enhance the location where the development will take place, making the new development more acceptable to local residents. This could be for a

community project, infrastructure or street scene enhancement (including bringing empty homes back into use).

### 3.2 Affordability

The term affordable housing can be difficult to define as it depends upon an individual's circumstances; any given property is (usually) affordable to someone. In planning terms it is strictly delineated in Planning Policy Statement 3<sup>8</sup> as either social rented, intermediate and now Affordable rent housing which is 'provided to specified eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices'. As such it is important to gain an understanding of the market conditions and local incomes to determine the level of affordability within Southend.

As stated in section 2.2 around 73% of our residents are owner-occupiers but for some the opportunity to own their own home is not an option.

According to Hometrack© in April 2011 the house price to earnings ratio based on data from "annual survey of Hours & Earnings" and sales & valuations over the last 12 months, is currently 7.2:1 this compares to 7.7:1 regionally. However, when looking at the lower quartile house prices to earnings the ratio jumps to 8.3:1.

The earnings data is based on a single person in full time employment whilst the majority of households have more than one earner, using household disposable income this brings affordability to 6:1 in the borough against 6.2: in the region. For the lower quartile house prices this again goes up this time to 7:1.

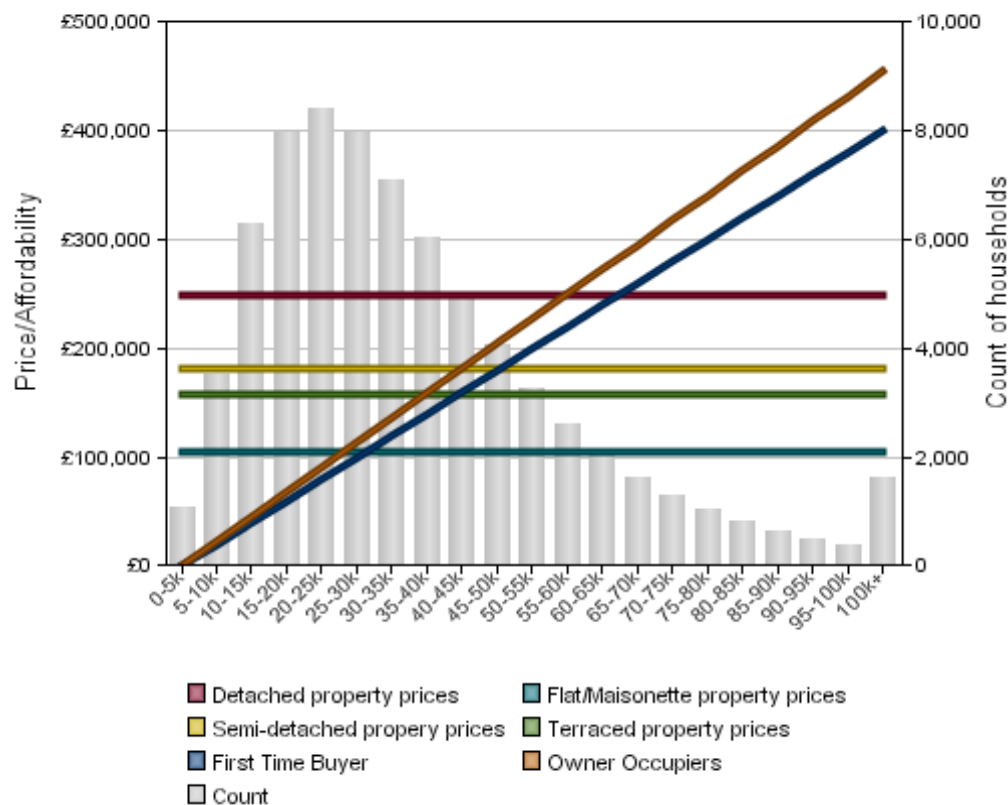
The TGSE SHMA update 2010 shows that Lower Quartile weekly earnings were £349 against £375 across the TGSE. Further analysis showed that 61% & 52% of residents were unable to Buy or Rent respectively with lower quartile earnings. The SHMA goes on to recommend that a policy of an 80:20 split of affordable housing between social rented and intermediate provision as a starting point for negotiations.

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<sup>8</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>



**3 times income**



The cost of buying an average 2-bed property in the borough with an 85% mortgage (3.57% rate) is £151 per week, or 43% of disposable income.

Using a HomeBuy product with a 40% first tranche and a 90% mortgage would be £104 per week. Rent may be payable on the 60% un-owned equity at 2.75%.

Many households with insufficient income or equity to purchase housing may choose to meet their needs in the private sector, rather than seek affordable housing provision. There is anecdotal evidence of individuals sharing housing, and the private rented sector plays an important role in the housing market alongside specific intermediate housing provision. It plays a particular role in catering for the needs of younger households, or those who are attracted by the flexibility which renting provides. Private renting is an attractive option for many households who cannot afford to buy across the sub-region.

The cost of renting an average 2-bed property is £154 in the private sector against £82 in the public sector.

To assist the public sector provide affordable homes for those unable to access housing via the private sector and raise finance to provide additional units alternative rent and tenancy options have been introduced.

**Strategic Aim 1- Action 1**

- **Maximise opportunities to deliver affordable housing through planning contributions**

- Clear communication of mix and type of housing required in the town of both market and affordable (split between social rented, intermediate rented and shared ownership).
- Shared understanding of the range of affordable housing options available
- Understanding viability issues in the local market and pressing for maximum affordable housing contributions
- Transition to new planning legislation introduced through localism bill

### 3.3 LIP (Local Investment Plan)

Our Local Investment Plan drawn up in partnership with the HCA outlines the priorities for the borough and includes the following housing led schemes that compliment and contribute to the wider borough picture.

- **Heath and Carby House** - Purchase and enabling works of redundant office buildings at the northern end of Victoria Avenue in order to act as a catalyst for the provision of new housing and the gateway to the town.
- **Maybrook and Burland** - Development of housing units. To regenerate an existing council owned site that has been empty for a number of years.
- **Tower Block Regeneration** – To regenerate council owned stock to change the tenure mix and dynamics of the area whilst ensuring all stock meets decent homes including hard to treat properties.
- **Shelford House** – a bespoke new build scheme will be provided to provide alternative accommodation for residents of Saxon Lodge Residential Home as well as additional independent living for people with a Learning Disability and respite care provision.
- **St Mary's Cottages** (the Alms Houses) – to be preserved with the original features and at the same time provide independent living units for vulnerable adults.

#### Strategic Aim 1- Action 2

- **Work with partners (internally assets/planners/economic regeneration, externally RPs, HCA, developers, land owners) to investigate options to deliver new affordable housing in innovative ways with minimal or alternative public subsidy**
  - Local Investment Plan- Agreeing short and long term housing priorities for the Borough with the HCA including use of Local Authority land/property.
  - Exploiting advantages of policy opportunities eg New Homes Bonus, Community Right to Build
  - Recognise importance of housing in improving economic prosperity in town- Local Economic Assessment/Regen Framework

## **3.4 Investment in Affordable Housing**

### **Tax Increment Financing**

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an investment tool for financing infrastructure and other related development that has been successfully employed in North America for 40 years. Industry and local government have developed the UK version of TIF to work in the UK context. It does not involve any additional taxation and results in a net gain for the local and national economies, delivering private sector jobs and physical and social regeneration that can save public money. UK TIF is a national framework through which responsibility and power for local economic growth and renewal is given to local communities.

The UK TIF model is based on reinvesting a proportion of future business rates from an area back into infrastructure and related development. It applies where the sources of funding available for a scheme to deliver economic growth and renewal cannot cover the cost of infrastructure required by the scheme.

A lead agency – a local authority, private sector partner or some combination – raises money upfront to pay for infrastructure, on the basis that the increased business rate revenues generated by the scheme can be used to repay that initial investment.

### **Homes & Communities Agency**

The Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) issued their Affordable Homes Programme 2011-15 in March 2011. This programme aims to increase the supply of new affordable homes in England. £4.5bn has been identified to help deliver up to 150,000 new affordable homes. The majority of the homes will be made available as Affordable Rent and some for affordable home ownership.

HCA Investment Partners and prospective partners (Registered Providers/Registered Social Landlords/Housing Associations/Private Developers) submitted offers for £2.2bn of the funding in May 2011. It was announced in July 2011 that 1.8bn had been allocated to 146 partners including Registered Providers, developers and local authorities. These partners are currently finalising the Framework Agreements with the HCA following which local detail will be available.

The Eastern & South East Region, of which Southend is part, received £229m representing 13% of the total allocation to bring forward 14,400 new affordable home which represents 18% of the national total.

In previous HCA programmes Investment Partners have bid for grant to support individual schemes and the bids assessed as such as and when they become available. This time Investment Partners will be submitting an offer for a sum of monies to subsidise a set number of units across their development portfolio. Some of these units will be schemes ready to start

and others will be projections on past performance. Whilst the viability of schemes ready to go will be considered and support of local authorities sought, the decision will be as much about the organisations performance, overall grant expectations and future financial stability.

### **Affordable Rent**

As with some areas of the country, Southend is an area where there is a reasonable difference between public and private rent levels, as outlined above. Affordable Rents have been introduced to enable Registered Providers to charge up to 80% of Open Market Rents (including service charges) and utilise the difference to finance new affordable housing. However as with any new initiative time will allow an in-depth analysis of how this works within Southend on Sea.

In particular the interaction of the Affordable Rent tenure with a proposed new overall benefit cap of £26,000 per household per annum may mean that it becomes unviable to fund larger family homes. Once the Welfare Reform Bill has completed its parliamentary cycle, a clear picture of the effect will be available.

As parts of the Coalition Government's plans to rebalance the economy and help get Britain building again £210m was allocated in the budget to help at least 10,000 first time buyers purchase a new property by 2013 as part of the FirstBuy scheme.

This scheme will require first time buyers to obtain a deposit and mortgage for 80% of the sale price, with the remaining 20% being split between the developer and the HCA as equity loans. The equity loan will have a term of 25 years or property sale and will be free for the first five years with an annual fee of 1.75% in year six which will then have an annual uplift of RPI + 1%.

In addition as part of the Localism Bill there will be the opportunity to offer tenancies for a term which will offer maximum assistance to the tenant dependant on the circumstances. These tenancies will be for a minimum of two years with no maximum. It is anticipated that this will enable tenants to change tenure or location easier but still received assistance when required.

The Localism Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, outlines the new duty for Local Authorities to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy for their area. This covers what the authority expects Tenancies to look like in the borough for use on both Council Owned and other Public Sector stock. **The strategy must be published within 12 months of the enactment of the Bill – that's November 2012 by current timescales.**

It will be the overarching document that is supported by an Allocations Policy, Nomination Agreements and local lettings policies.

It will outline:

- Rent expectations by property type
- Expectation of how flexible tenancies will work.
- When Local lettings policies will be expected.

The Affordable Rent framework has a strong focus on Broad Rental Market Areas when considering future funding decisions. As such meetings have begun with partner LAs and RPs in the Thames Gateway South Essex sub region to ensure consistency of approach. The current aim is to produce a Sub Regional Strategic Tenancy Policy Statement that will set the principles for the development of each of the 5 LAs individual Strategic Tenancy Policies.

#### Strategic Aim 1- Action 3

- **Encourage a suitable mix of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of local residents**
  - In response to proposed social housing reforms; Publish strategic policy on tenancies for social housing in Southend incl. Affordable Rent (80% market rent) and variable tenancy lengths
  - Provide local housing needs data to inform Local Development Framework

### Quality Design

This strategy intent to reinforce the Councils Core Strategy requirement and the housing officers will take a leading role with the planning department via discussions with Private Developers and Registered Providers.

It is essential that the quality design of the units are making effective use of sustainable construction methods, energy efficiency and modern and sustainable technology which will reflect both good environmental as well as financial benefits for the residents.

When preparing Design Briefs and concept statement on council owned land an enhanced quality will be required, enabling exemplar demonstration schemes to come forward.

#### Strategic Aim 1- Action 3

- **Improve the standard and quality of new affordable housing**
  - Work with developers and RPs to improve the design and sustainability of affordable housing development

## 3.5 Core Strategy Information

At the heart of all plans for new housing and regeneration is the Council's Core Strategy DPD (Development Plan Document) which was adopted in December 2007. Within this document and its associate LDD's is all the information required to inform planning applications and regeneration projects which are within the borough albeit the public or private sectors. Whilst all should be given consideration those that sit easily within and guide this strategy are Chapter ten, CP8 of the Core Strategy, the Southend Design & Townscape Guide, the Boroughwide Character Study, the Development

Management DPD, the Employment Land & Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Chapter ten of the Core Strategy DPD outlines the housing provision for the borough to 2021 and shows an average of 325 per annum and the circumstances which an affordable housing contribution would be sought, namely:

- A. all residential proposals of **10-49\*** dwellings or 0.3 hectares up to 1.99 hectares make an affordable housing or key worker provision of not less than **20%** of the total number of units on site; and
- B. all residential proposals of **50\*** dwellings or 2 hectares or more make an affordable housing or key worker provision of not less than **30%** of the total number of units on the site;
- C. For sites providing **less than 10** dwellings (or below 0.3 ha) or larger sites where, exceptionally, the Borough Council is satisfied that on-site provision is not practical, they will negotiate with developers to obtain a **financial contribution to fund off-site provision**. The Council will ensure that any such sums are used to help address any shortfall in affordable housing.

This is expanded upon within the Development Management DPD and any development of an appropriate number of units not meeting these requirements would be expected to provide a financial assessment showing why this was not the case and proposing an alternative.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment May 2010 (SHLAA) identified that there were 1,260 dwellings with consent granted as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, that figure has now been updated and stands at 1,311 which includes S106 affordable housing contribution of 425.

Included within the SHLAA are 121 sites, which represents land availability to 2026 however the majority of these could be brought forward by 2018 if the right economic conditions prevail. These sites could bring forward 3,502 properties, by including sites which conform to planning policy and assuming the financial viability of the applications to meet Section 106 contributions this could provide 797 dwellings of affordable housing. Averaged across the 16 years this would provide circa 50 units new affordable housing per annum. Whilst officers will work closely with the landowners to see these units brought forward we have little control over the economic conditions that would be required for this to happen.

In addition to the above we are guided by Planning Policy Statements and in particular PPS3<sup>9</sup> that identifies the Governments aspirations for housing both affordable and private.

### 3.6 Development Control Information

There are outstanding consents for 1,311 properties within the borough, in addition the council have committed to using some small garage sites for

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<sup>9</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>

affordable housing and these are currently going through the planning process, as well as exploring housing options for other available sites.

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Five Year Total</b>
Graham House	2					<b>2</b>
Garrison	10					<b>10</b>
Garrages Phase II	8	31				<b>39</b>
Southchurch Road	29					<b>29</b>
Derek Gardens	5					<b>5</b>
Maybrook & Burland		47				<b>47</b>
Shelford House		16				<b>16</b>
Alms Houses		3				<b>3</b>
Current planning consents			132	132	132	<b>396</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>547</b>

**Fig 4:** \_Showing projected affordable housing delivery over next 2011/16

The named schemes in Fig 6 are either on site or being led by Registered Provider Partners so have a degree of certainty in being delivered. The remaining units are derived from the affordable housing element of extant planning permissions. The council has no control over whether these sites actually come forward but will continue to work with developers and land owners to ensure their fulfilment.

#### Strategic Aim 1- Resource implications

Homes & Communities Agency Funding  
 Green deal  
 Council Assets/Capital  
 Staff Resources  
 Private and public Investment

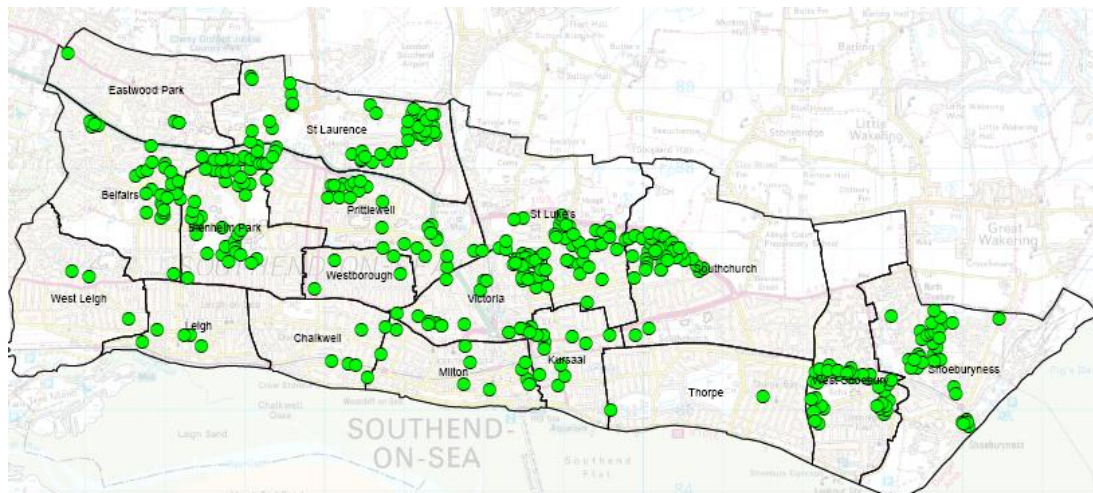
## 4 Existing Stock

### Strategic Aim 2

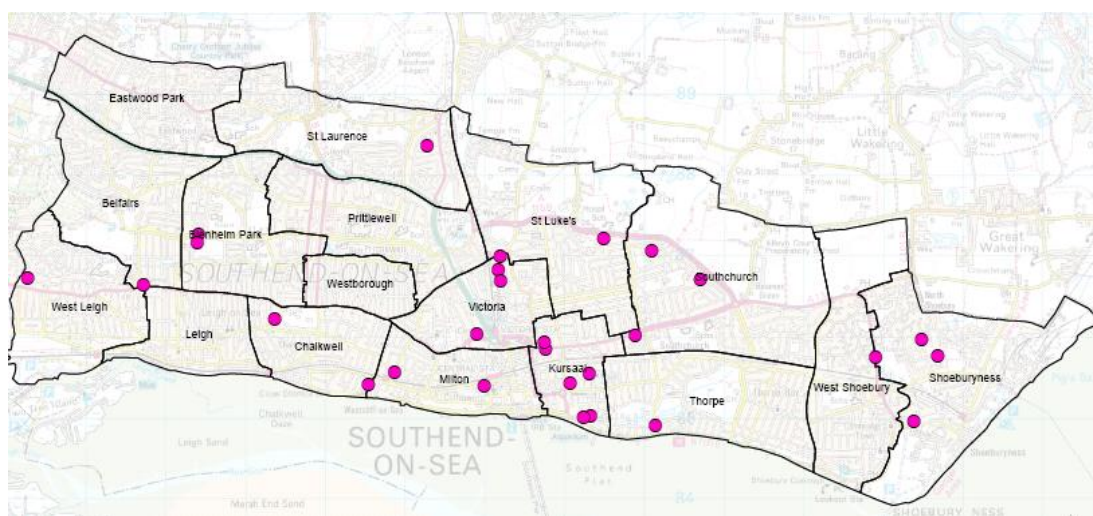
*‘Improving the quality of existing housing stock achieving Decent, Healthy & Environmentally Sustainable homes across all tenures’*

### 4.1 Social Housing incl. Council Owned Stock

The number of social housing properties in Southend has continued to fall over the past thirty years and there are now around 10,000 social housing properties in the town (6,200 owned by the Council, 3,800 owned and managed by one of thirty housing associations), this represents 12% of the total housing stock in the town. By comparison the private rented sector represents 14% of the total housing stock in the town.



**Fig 5:** Council Owned Stock across the borough



**Fig 6:** Registered Providers main stock across the borough



Given reductions in Government subsidy social housing landlords will be required to think differently about how they manage their stock. This may lead to an increasing prevalence of stock rationalisation for landlords who have a and opportunities for local providers to take on management functions for landlords with limited presence in a locality.

The current constraints on development opportunities and the high level of housing need in the town, the efficient use of existing social housing stock has become increasingly important.

A review of council owned properties/land to ensure that they best meet needs of current and future residents is planned. Priority areas will include the tower blocks, sheltered housing and unused council owned garage sites.

**Tower Blocks-** Explore options that can be pursued to improve the physical environment of tower block accommodation improve community cohesion and help to encourage sustainable communities. Initially focusing on the town centre tower blocks, in line with the aspirations of the Southend central Area Action Plan (SCAAP).

**Sheltered Housing-** The standard of council owned sheltered accommodation has been improved in recent years and continues to provide a valued home to a large number of residents. However, the popularity of some of the schemes has remained low reflecting a view that the accommodation may not meet the expectations of potential residents. This has resulted in relatively high void rates and necessitates a review to explore all options for the schemes. This review will use previous good practice and learning from local examples (Nayland, Westwood, Longmans and Keats) and further a field.

**Council owned garage sites-** The initial first two phases of redeveloping redundant garage sites to create new family sized affordable housing is due for completion in 2013. The opportunity now exists to review the remainder of the council's garage sites to assess the possibility for further opportunities to develop affordable housing.

#### Strategic Aim 2- Action 1

- **Outline strategic vision for council owned stock**

Outline asset management opportunities available as a result of any future reform of the Housing Revenue Account

- Tower Block renewal- outline improvement programme for the 13 council owned tower blocks in the town including priority sites
- Review of older persons' accommodation provision and exploration of how it may better meet needs of existing and future residents. To include review of sheltered housing stock.
- Strategic Review of council owned garage sites

Social housing landlords have managed to improve the standard of their stock over the past decade through a combination of increased funding and better

financial management. For council owned stock the final investment of £10.5million (2011/12 £3.446 m, 2012/13 £7m) will mean that over 90% of properties will be considered to have reached the Decent Homes Standard by April 2013.

Following the removal of the Audit Commission and the scaling back of the TSA's (Tenant Services Authority) remit the sector is entering a new period of 'light touch' regulation there is still uncertainty around what the new arrangements will look like. In spite of this it is clear that the new regulatory environment continues to strongly encourage engagement and co-operation with residents and emphasis on 'transparency' of information.

The reform of the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) and moves to self-financing offers challenges (a proposed £35million final debt settlement) and opportunities (ability to keep a greater proportion of rental income and lift on borrowing restrictions) for stock retaining Local Authorities such as Southend requiring a stronger emphasis on 'local' financial management...

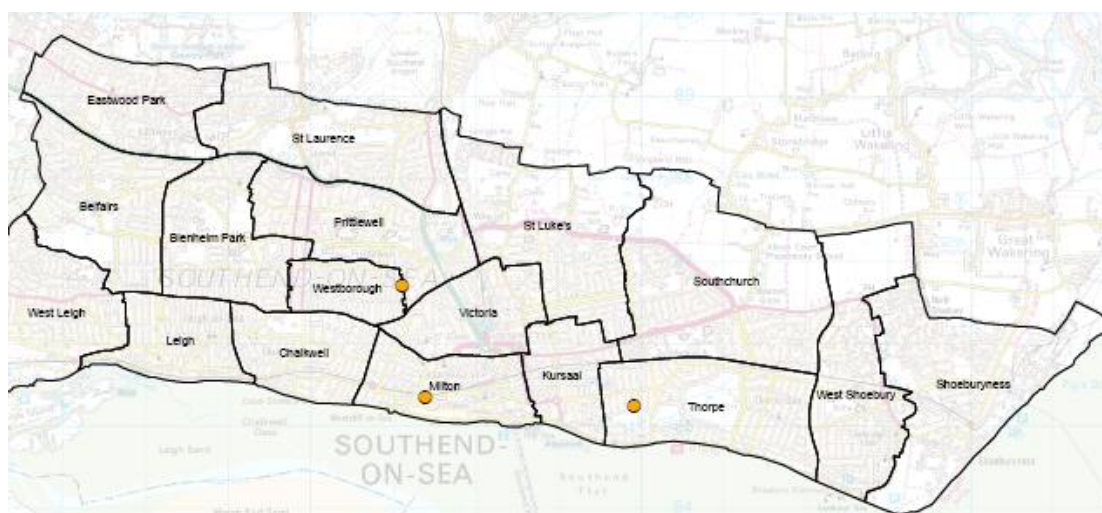
The Council's 6,200 properties are currently managed by an ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation)- South Essex Homes. The considerable pressure on public finances, the imminent conclusion of Decent Homes programme funding and the HRA reforms present an opportunity to review this arrangement. The review will focus on Value for Money, balancing financial considerations with the needs of residents.

#### Strategic Aim 2- Action 2

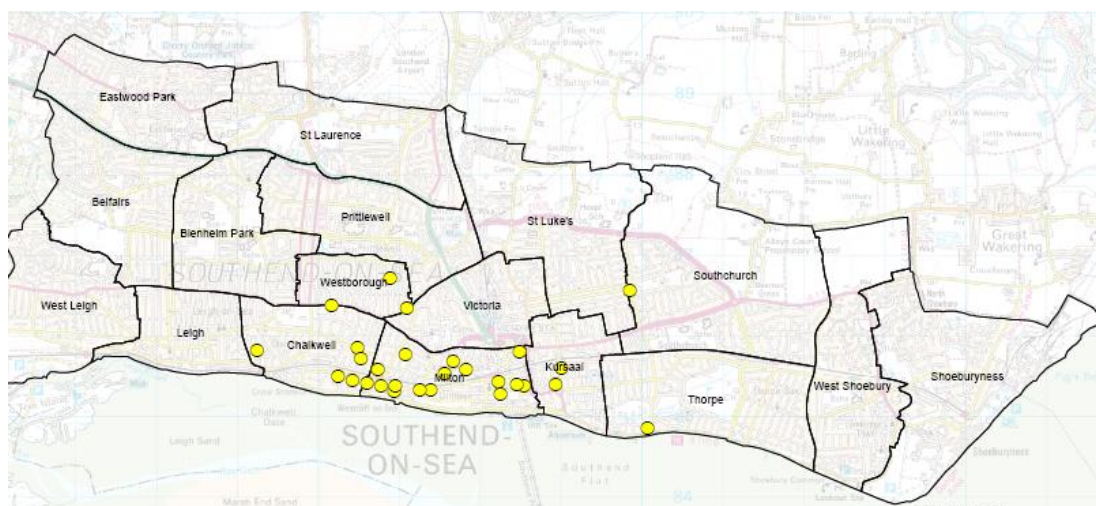
- **Achieving and maintaining Decent Homes Standards across social housing in Borough and providing excellent, value for money services for residents**
  - Decent Homes programme improvements continuing for council owned stock
  - Preparation for new regulatory regime for the social housing sector
  - Ongoing review to ensure the management function of council owned properties is fit for purpose and offers value for money

## 4.2 Private Sector Renewal

Previously, Southend has published individual strategies for the various works undertaken relating to private sector housing. It is felt that it would advantageous to bring these strands together into a coherent Private Sector Renewal document covering how the council plans to improve the privately owned housing stock in the borough. The inclusion of Private Sector Renewal within the Housing Strategy gives a better view of the links between the sectors and makes our publications user-friendly.



**Fig 7:** Successful Empty Dwelling Management Orders



**Fig 8:** Known Houses in Multiple Occupations

The documents previously produced are:

- Empty Homes Strategy
- Disabled Facilities Grant Policy
- Energy Efficiency Strategy
- Decent Homes Strategy

The Housing Assistance Policy is a statutory document and is currently being reviewed in light of future financial implications.

The purpose of the Policy is to set out the circumstances in which Southend Borough Council will assist owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords in the private sector with housing renewal in light of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and the changes introduced by the Housing Act 2004 in April 2006 which have greater freedom to local authorities to enable improvements to privately owned dwellings, where owners need financial assistance. The Action Plan focuses upon;

- Improving standards in singly occupied privately rented properties working with Landlords and tenants through advice, regulation and enforcement
- Providing Disabled Facilities Grants to assist the elderly and disabled to live independently in their own homes

The council works in partnership with other national and local organisations to regulate, monitor & ensure the properties within the private sector meet high standards.

This partnership is currently working on projects in the borough that fall under seven areas.

- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Empty Homes Programme
- Regulation of Private Rented Lettings
- Energy Efficiency: Warm Homes
- Monitoring Housing Conditional
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Private Sector Renewal Housing assistance

We are fortunate that despite the worst recession in three decades we were able to achieve the targets agreed with the last Government. Some examples of which are below.

- The Launch of the Landlord Forum in September 2008 was successfully received and now meets on a quarterly basis.
- 54 Empty Properties has been brought back into use
- 1074 homes improved their energy efficiency via the Warm Front Initiative and Warm & Health Homes Partnership.
- The transfer of privately owned long term empty properties for which the council has obtained an Empty Dwelling Management Order to SEH for management.
- Launch of sub regional landlords accreditation scheme in September 2010
- Start on consultation to introduce Selective Licensing to areas with high prevalence of properties in disrepair and associated Antisocial behaviour

The priority is to build on partnerships already in place and consider additional ways of working which will enable our private sector residents to live in their property safely and without fear of crime.

The introduction of the Southend Campus of the University of Essex will enhance the retail and employments opportunities within the borough; it will however, in the long term, place a greater burden on the private rented sector.

University Square has 561 rooms available for rent and it is anticipated that this will meet the need for student accommodation over the next five years. Following that and depending on the numbers of student who live locally as well as the impact of high fees, there are estimated to be 230 students per annum looking for accommodation within the private rented sector.

The Government have announced that £100m is to be made available nationally to tackle empty homes and an expression of interest has been prepared in partnership with Registered Providers.

In March 2011 Southend-on-Sea Borough Council signaled its commitment to reduce fuel poverty within the borough by signing the East of England Fuel Poverty Declaration<sup>10</sup> developed by the charity National Energy Action.

In an effort to better understand the standards of the privately owned stock in the Borough, Southend Borough Council have committed to delivery of a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey.

### Strategic Aim 2- Action 3

- **Continue to encourage improvement of Private Rented stock through delivery of Private Sector Renewal Strategy Action Plan**
  - Continue to reduce number of empty homes
  - Improving energy efficiency of private sector stock,
  - Improve the standards of HMOs through licensing and cooperation with landlords
  - Introduce Selective Licensing scheme
  - Expand Landlords Accreditation Scheme
  - Undertake Private Sector stock condition survey

The majority of the homes that the residents of Southend in 2050 will be living in are already standing today and there is a real need to ensure that retrofitting of existing properties is as high profile target as ensuring new homes are ecologically efficient. Making existing homes energy efficient 'retrofitting' plays a key role in meeting national and local targets to reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty.

### Strategic Aim 2- Action 4

- **Increase the environmental and sustainability standards existing properties**
  - Pursue opportunities for grant/loan improvement to existing stock through retro-fitting eg Green Deal

### Strategic Aim 2- Resources

Decent Homes Funding  
 Central & Local Government Grants  
 Public & Private Investment  
 Green Deal  
 Staff Resources

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nea.org.uk/east-of-england-fuel-poverty-declaration/>

## 5 Access to housing

### Strategic Aim 3

*'Promoting greater accessibility to different types of housing and independent living for vulnerable groups and continuing work to prevent homelessness'*

### 5.1 Allocations Policy

Even given the reduction in the number of social housing properties in the town over the last 30 years there are still over 500 council owned or Registered Provider properties let/re-let according to the Allocations Policy each year. The function of allocating properties has been carried out using a CBL (Choice Based Lettings) method since 2009. This has proved popular with users and has also allowed for introduction of more efficient processes. There are no current plans to change the CBL method of allocating properties although the system will be subject to review and an improvement plan to ensure meets the needs of applicants and partners.

Under proposals outlined in the Localism Bill Local Authorities will have greater powers to define the way that social housing is allocated? Ongoing monitoring of how the Allocations Policy is delivering key strategic priorities; promoting employment, rewarding local residents, ensuring access for all and improving local areas- will be a key target over the coming years.

### Strategic Aim 3- Action 1

- **Review of Allocations Policy to better match local needs**
  - Review of Choice Based Lettings allocations system, increasing priority for local residents and working households (tackling worklessness)
  - Explore methods to meet housing need whilst providing greater priority for working households and local residents
  - Clearer definition between homeseekers with need to move and those with aspiration to do so in order to target services accordingly
  - Introduction of Local Letting Policies
  - Review of nomination agreements with Registered Providers taking into account possibility of new affordable rent and flexible length tenancies

### 5.2 Homeless Prevention

The Homeless Act 2002 requires all Local Authorities to produce a strategy to outline how they will tackle homelessness in their area. The current homeless prevention strategy 2008-11 is nearing its end and a refresh is due for

completion in 2011.

During the term of the current strategy there have been major changes in the political and economic climates. The results of the Comprehensive Spending Review will have a major impact on how our services are provided which together with an increased demand for affordable housing will prove challenging.

Via joint working with our partners the Southend Council Housing Options team has been successful in achieving all the stated objectives in the current strategy and has focus on prevention rather than reacting to a household becoming homeless. Anyone who has concerns regarding their housing situation should approach the team sooner rather than later.

We are fortunate that despite the recession we are able to achieve the targets agreed with the last Government. This has been achieved through joint working with key stakeholders and partners in the borough. Some examples of which are below:

- Weekly surgeries have been set up at HARP & Storehouse
- SBC has a dedicated outreach worker
- Access Gateway set up for supported accommodation
- Expansion of floating support services and supported accommodation within the Supporting People Programme
- Rent Deposit Scheme for use in the private rented sector
- Implementation of Choice Based Lettings System “On the Move”

In addition the Community Housing team work closely with Children & Learning to meet the needs of young people who are deemed to old to be treated as children but do not come within the adult legislation. This has led to the formation of a joint protocol to ensure tenancy skills are developed and housing opportunities identified.

A review of the current strategy action plan shows that homelessness due to repossessions was lower than anticipated however if the interest rates were to rise this could have an adverse effect and cause an increase in the numbers of repossessions.

The coalition Government have started to change the way funding is provided and is consulting on the Localism Bill. Whilst the majority of this document is not directly related to this strategy consideration should be given to the effect of the New Homes Bonus and “Affordable Rents” on Homeless Prevention. This strategy will focus on how Southend on Sea will address Homeless Prevention in terms of both the Statutory Duty of the Local Authority and partnership working with other agencies to signpost and assist those in need over the next two years.

### **5.3 Welfare Reforms**

October 2010 brought forward the Coalition Government's Welfare Benefit Reforms that will be implemented over a three-year period.

The local housing allowances will be restricted to 30th percentile rent levels for Local Housing Allowance. Non-dependant deductions will be increased (the first time since 2001) and the “disregard” threshold being decreased to £10k, these measures will reduce incomes for those already on a low income.

In 2013 all new Housing Benefit claims will be made via the Department of Work and Pension and included within the Universal Credit. It is yet to be decided if Local Authority and Registered Provider tenancies will be included.

Council Tax Benefit will be abolished and replaced with a discretionary fund, to be 90% of current subsidy. It is expected that the discretionary housing fund will continue.

#### Strategic Aim 3- Action 2

- **Continue to improve the effectiveness of Homeless Prevention support in the town**
  - Develop Homeless Prevention implementation plan
  - Understand the impact of proposed changes to the welfare system and in particular housing benefit/local housing allowance on the local housing market and develop action plan to ensure local residents have access to suitable housing.
  - Recognise and support the work of the charitable and third sector in helping to prevent homelessness

## 5.4 Vulnerable Adults/Specialist Accommodation

Any of us can be seen or determined as vulnerable during our lifetimes but for the purpose of this strategy a vulnerable adult is someone who has a specific mental health need or a physical or sensory impairment that requires additional support to live independently. Whilst this is not an exhaustive list it includes, residents with a learning disability, or a sensory or physical impairment, mental health illness such as dementia or drug and alcohol abuse, young adults who are part of the transition from children’s to adult services and older people who require assistance to maintain their independence.

### Supporting People

Linked with the housing for all vulnerable groups is their care and support both in terms of paid care but also unpaid carers whose own needs must be addressed if they are to maintain their caring role. The council is also required to help people to maintain their tenancy and assist where required; this is achieved via our Supporting People Funding.

Given that the 5-year SP Strategy 2007-11 was completed in 2010 a decision was made to not refresh this strategy but to draft and finalise a 3 year Supporting People commissioning and procurement plan by October 2011. As the SP programme covers such a wide range of vulnerable groups, the needs



of these groups are already highlighted within the specific commissioning strategies that exist locally (i.e. The Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy) and the decision was therefore taken to move away from a specific SP strategy.

Our long-term aims are to ensure that the needs of the 21 vulnerable groups for which we are responsible, have their housing related support needs met. This will be delivered through partnership working with other commissioners, council departments, service users, service providers, the voluntary and community sector, the primary care trust and probation. The needs of vulnerable groups will be met through re-tendering of services, commissioning of new services where required and re-modelling of existing services so that they are more suited to the needs of the client groups they work with.

In the short-term (next 2 years) our focus is on:

- Continued re-negotiation of contracts to improve value for money
- Reduced programme administration costs
- Continuous improvement in service quality, performance and delivery of outcomes (we will no longer contract with services who deliver below standard B (Good) in the Quality Assessment Framework)
- Income generation and involvement in national pilots
- Market testing of services where we currently spend a large % of the programme budget so as to deliver efficiencies

There is a recognised link between Health and Housing which recognises that poor quality housing have an impact on physical wellbeing, poverty, pollution crime and access to services. Evidence has shown that overcrowding contributes to the transmission of infectious and respiratory diseases in a similar way to damp, cold housing affects Asthma and chronic respiratory symptoms.

Taking this a stage further shows the lack of affordable housing can have on nutrition and add to fuel poverty due to insufficient disposable income to buy food & fuel. These circumstances can all lead to a reduced life expectancy.

The National Drug Strategy: Reducing Demand, Restricting Supply, and Building Recovery: supporting People to Live a Drug Free Life was issued in 2010 and the section which aligns with this strategy is “build recovery in communities” which promotes abstinence-orientated treatments. This concept aims to give individuals the skills and resources to recover from dependency and learn values that will enable them to secure housing and employment.

The council in line with Government’s vision is reducing the dependency on residential accommodation and encouraging people to live independently in line with their abilities. SBC will work closely with its partners to identify those who could move and ensure the appropriate accommodation is provided to meet the needs.

There are around 22,189,000 homes in England and the great Majority (85%) do not allow someone using a wheelchair to get to and through the front door without difficulty.<sup>11</sup>

Using data from the Survey of English Housing 2007/08 it is estimated that there are 57,344 (3%) wheelchair users within the East of England with 5,251 (9%) with unmet housing need. Applying this formula to Southend on Sea indicates there are circa 5000 wheelchair users in the borough with almost 300 having an unmet need for an adapted property<sup>12</sup>.

Ensuring that adapted properties are recycled to appropriate tenants is essential to ensure the reduction of unmet need. Southend Borough Council currently recycles adapted properties via nomination panel as an exception to CBL, whether this is most effective way of allocating these units, as numbers increase, will need to be assessed.

All applications for adaptations will be considered in line with the Council Policy.<sup>13</sup>

### **Housing for Older People**

The Older People's Accommodation and Support Needs Strategy 2008-11 set out our aspiration to support older people to remain in their own homes for as long as they are able to possibly with support, assistive technology and a commitment to lifetime homes. If and when, an older person has to move, they want help to obtain good financial advice to enable them to make an informed decision from the options available to them.

Key to this process is shaping the market in provision of specialist accommodation for older people including; retirement accommodation Conventional sheltered housing, Extra Care and Registered Care Home. This requires an understanding of the current and future demand for this type of accommodation in informing commissioning and Planning decisions.

In addition Southend was an active member of the Commission of Enquiry into co-operation between Housing, Health & Adult social Care carried out early in 2011. This document was produced on behalf of Basildon, Castle Point, Essex, Rochford, Southend and Thurrock Councils as well as both South East and West PCT's. The findings have been used to inform this strategy and recommendations included in both this documents and the Older Peoples Strategy.

### **Tackling Child Poverty**

A recent study by the Prince's Trust found that one in four young people in Southend live in poverty<sup>14</sup>. In order to address this Southend Council is

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<sup>11</sup> Mind the Step: An estimation of housing need among wheelchair users in England: December 10

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/housing-ageing-population-panel-innovation>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/81/council\\_housing\\_advice](http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/81/council_housing_advice)

<sup>14</sup> Living in poverty is defined by having 60% less disposable income after bills and housing costs met than the average family.

working with voluntary, private and public sector partners to inspire the families to achieve and lift them out of poverty.

A child poverty needs assessment has recently been incorporated into Southend's children and young people's plan. This information will be used to update the Child Poverty Strategy.

The aims of the Child Poverty Strategy tie in very closely with those of the housing strategy and working together with our partners we can ensure that the children and their families are lifted from poverty and break the cycle to a better future for them all.

### Strategic Aim 3- Action 3

- **Close working with clients and commissioners to ensure a suitable range of housing options provided for vulnerable adults**
  - Communicating (to planning, developers and builders etc) the specific needs of individuals with specialist housing requirements and ensuring their provision alongside General Need's affordable housing.
  - Work with providers of specialist housing to achieve the correct mix of accommodation type and tenures for Southend's future needs in line with wider Health and Social Care aims
  - Continued improvement and development of Supporting People programme as part of delivery of suitable housing options for vulnerable residents
  - Ensure the housing needs of the town's older persons are reflected through provision of the right balance of housing options e.g. Extra Care, Sheltered, Telecare

### Strategic Aim 3- Resources

Staff Resources  
Voluntary & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector partnership – pooled budgets  
Central & Local Government Grants  
HRA

## 6 Action Plan (covering 2 years from October 2011)

Ref	Key Project/ Action	Outcomes	Target Date	Progress notes	Performance Measure	Owner	RAG
<b>HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN</b>							
<b>Aim 1: Delivering quality affordable housing to meet local needs and helping to promote a sustainable and balanced housing market</b>							
1.1	Maximise opportunities to deliver affordable housing through planning contributions	➤ Clear communication of mix and type of housing required in the town of both market and affordable (split between social rented, intermediate rented and shared ownership)	Sept 12			SF	
		➤ Shared understanding of the range of affordable housing options available	Dec 11			SF	
		➤ Understanding viability issues in the local market and pressing for maximum affordable housing contributions	Sept 12			SF	
		➤ Transition to new planning legislation introduced through localism bill	Mar 13			SF	
1.2	Work with partners (internally assets/ planners/ ergonomic regeneration, externally RPs, HCA, developers, land owners) to investigate options to deliver new affordable housing in innovative ways with minimal or alternative public subsidy	➤ Local Investment Plan- Agreeing short term and long term housing priorities for the borough with the HCA including use of Local Authority land/property	Sept 11			JL	
		➤ Exploiting advantages of policy opportunities eg New Homes Bonus, Community Right to build	Sept 12			DB	
		➤ Recognise importance of housing in improving economic prosperity in town- Local Economic Assessment/ Regen Framework	Sept 12			DB	
1.3	Encourage a suitable mix of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of local	➤ In response to proposed social housing reforms; Publish strategic policy on tenancies for social housing in Southend	Framework agreed by March			SF	

Ref	Key Project/ Action	Outcomes	Target Date	Progress notes	Performance Measure	Owner	RAG
	residents	including Affordable Rent (80% market rent) and variable tenancy lengths	2012 Policy Dec 12				
		➤ Provide local housing needs data to inform Local Development Framework	Sept 12			SF	
1.4	Improve the standard and quality of new affordable housing	➤ Work with developers and RPs to improve the design and sustainability of affordable housing development	Mar 13			DM	
<b>Aim 2: Improving the quality of existing housing stock achieving decent, healthy and environmentally sustainable homes across all tenures</b>							
2.1	Outline strategic vision for council owned stock. Outline asset management opportunities available as a result of any future reform of the Housing Revenue Account	➤ Tower block renewal- outline improvement programme for the 13 council owned tower blocks in the town, including priority sites	Initial Report to Council Mar 2012			SF	
		➤ Review of older person's accommodation provision and exploration of how it may better meet needs of existing and future residents. To include review of sheltered housing stock	Mar 2013			EC	
		➤ Strategic review of council owned garage sites	Sept 2012			SEH	
2.2	Achieving and maintaining Decent Homes Standards across social housing in the Borough and providing excellent, value for money services for residents	➤ Decent Homes programme improvements continuing for council owned stock	Mar 2013			SEH	
		➤ Preparation for new regulatory regime for the social housing sector	Mar 2013			JL	
		➤ Ongoing review to ensure the management function of council owned properties is fit for purpose and offers value for money	Mar 2012			JL	
2.3	Continue to encourage	➤ Continue to reduce number of empty				LE	

Ref	Key Project/ Action	Outcomes	Target Date	Progress notes	Performance Measure	Owner	RAG
	improvement of Private Rented stock through delivery of private Sector Renewal Strategy Action Plan	homes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improving energy efficiency of private sector stock</li> <li>➤ Improve the standards of HMOs through licensing and cooperation with landlords</li> <li>➤ Introduce selective licensing scheme</li> <li>➤ Expand landlords accreditation scheme</li> <li>➤ Undertake Private Sector stock condition survey</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2013				
2.4	Increase the environmental and sustainability standards existing properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Pursue opportunities for grant/loan improvement to existing stock through retro-fitting eg Green Deal</li> </ul>	Mar 2013			LE	
<b>Aim 3: Promoting greater accessibility to different types of housing and independent living for vulnerable groups and continuing work to prevent homelessness</b>							
3.1	Review of Allocations Policy to better match local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review of Choice Based Lettings allocations system, increasing priority for local residents and working households (tackling worklessness)</li> </ul>	Mar 2012			AN/DB	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Explore methods to meet housing need whilst providing greater priority for working households and local residents</li> </ul>	Oct 2012			AN/DB	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clearer definition between homeseekers with need to move and those with aspiration to do so in order to target services accordingly</li> </ul>	Mar 2013			AN	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Introduction of Local Letting Policies</li> </ul>	Mar 2013			AN/DB	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review of nomination agreements with Registered Providers taking in to account possibility of new affordable rent and flexible length tenancies</li> </ul>	Mar 2013			AB/SF	
3.2	Continue to improve the effectiveness of Homeless Prevention support in the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop Homeless Prevention implementation plan</li> </ul>	Mar 2012			SF	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Understand the impact of proposed changes to the welfare system and in particular housing benefit/ local housing</li> </ul>	Mar 2013			SF/AN	

Ref	Key Project/ Action	Outcomes	Target Date	Progress notes	Performance Measure	Owner	RAG
		allowance on the local housing market and develop action plan to ensure local residents have access to suitable housing					
		➤ Recognise and support the work of the charitable and third sector in helping to prevent homelessness	Mar 2012			AN	
3.3	Close working with clients and commissioners to ensure a suitable range of housing options provided for vulnerable adults	➤ Communication (to planning, developers and builders etc) the specific needs of individuals with specialist housing requirements and ensuring their provision alongside general needs affordable housing	Mar 2013			SF	
		➤ Work with providers of specialist housing to achieve the correct mix of accommodation type and tenures for Southend's future needs in line with wider Health and Social Care aims	Sept 2013			SF	
		➤ Continued improvement and development of Supporting People programme as part of delivery of suitable housing options for vulnerable residents	Ongoing			AN/LW	
		➤ Ensure the housing needs of the towns older persons are reflected through provision of the right balance of housing options eg Extra Care, Sheltered, Telecare				SF	
<b>Overarching Aim</b>							
4	Improve Housing needs analysis produced/available in order to meet the needs of local stakeholders to improve investment and commissioning decisions						

Ref	Key Project/ Action	Outcomes	Target Date	Progress notes	Performance Measure	Owner	RAG
5	<i>Resources</i>	<p><b>This strategy required two identified sums:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £TBC for review of ALMO services</li> <li>• £TBC for primary Housing Needs Analysis being requested from the New Homes Bonus</li> </ul> <p>All general fund actions identified in the strategy will be covered within existing resources or where additional resources are required they will need to be considered alongside all other Council priorities as part of each year's annual budget process for both revenue and capital.</p> <p>Given the current limited resource position for Local Government and consequently the Council, any additional resource requests will need to be part of a prioritisation process for resources and therefore may not be funded.</p> <p>All avenues of external funding will also be explored to assist with progressing the relevant actions.</p>					



## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix 1: Stakeholder lists

	WHO?	Questions?	HOW?
HEADLINE GROUP	Target Audience	Key Messages	Channel of Communication
RESIDENTS	Social Tenants	Do the aims and outcomes give the flexibility to meet your future needs?	Part of OP strategy Consultation
	Owner Occupiers		Website
	Private Tenants		
3rd SECTOR	Carers	Do the aims meet the needs of you & your clients.	Via existing forums LD Action 2 group, Carers Strategy Grp, Service user panel, SP provider Group
	Voluntary Groups		
	Charities		
Health	PCT	Are the aims and outcomes helping to improve health?	
	Hospital		
	GP's		
SBC Departments	Assets	Are the aims assisting to meet the needs and aspirations of the community plan and other corporate documents?	Workshop Ad-hoc meetings
	Accountancy		
	Community Housing		
	Economic Regeneration		
	Strategic Planners		
Housing Providers	Planning Consultants	Does this document assist you to plan future developments within the borough	Via existing forums
	Architects		
	Developers		
Private Sector	Landlords	Does this document give you an overview of the future resident base for the borough?	Via existing forums, landlords forum,
	Letting Agents		
	Estate Agents		
Public Sector	Registered Providers	Does this document show how we can work together to address the need?	Via existing forum
	HCA		workshop or email
	Charitable Trustes i.e. HARP, YMCA		
Elected Representatives	MP's	Do the outcomes reflect both the national and local agendas	workshop or email
	Members Working Party		Via existing forum
	Ward Members		Workshop

## 7.2 Appendix 2: Consultation Activity Information

Information and consultation activity to inform development of the Housing Strategy has been ongoing since the implementation of the current Housing Strategy in 2008. In addition a formal 12 week consultation exercise was undertaken between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2011 which aimed to capture key stakeholder views and help to ensure the Strategy was accepted by all delivery partners. As part of the process a Draft Housing Vision was produced and shared at events, meetings and via the council's website.

A list of the consultation methods used as part of consultation process is included in table below;

Housing Members Working Party	Homeless Prevention Strategy Steering Group
Housing Strategy Consultation Event	Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Officers Meeting
Meetings with individual Registered Providers (Housing Associations)	Learning Disability Partnership Board meeting
SAVs Community Forum	Developers Forum
Southend-on-Sea Council Website 'Have your say' section	Meetings with Strategic Planners, Asset management

Outlined below are a summary of the consultation questions asked and response.

### **Aim 1- Delivering quality affordable housing to meet local needs and helping to promote a sustainable and balanced housing market**

#### **Maximise opportunities to deliver affordable housing through planning contributions**

- Understanding viability issues in the local market and pressing for maximum affordable housing contributions
- Clear communication of mix and type of housing required in the town both of market and affordable. Including communication of affordable housing split between social rented, intermediate rented and shared ownership ratios
- Smooth transition to new planning legislation introduced through localism bill,

#### **Work with partners (internally assets/planners/economic regeneration, externally RPs, HCA, developers, land owners) to investigate options to deliver new affordable housing in innovative ways with minimal or alternative public subsidy**

- Local Investment Plan- Agreeing short and long term housing priorities for the Borough with the HCA including use of Local Authority land
- Taking advantage of funding opportunities arising from proposed New Homes Bonus

### **Encourage a suitable mix of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of local residents**

- In response to proposed new powers as outlined in the consultation paper Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing - Publish strategic policy on tenancies for social housing in Southend incl. Affordable Rent (80% market rent) and variable tenancy lengths
- Develop a planning framework which reflects the needs of local residents through access to robust housing needs data

### **Improve the standard and quality of new affordable housing**

- Work with developers and RPs to improve the design and sustainability of affordable housing development

Question 1 <i><b>Will this give the flexibility to meet the future needs and aspirations to provide new affordable housing?</b></i>
Question 2 <i><b>Does this assist in meeting the needs and aspirations of the community plan and other corporate documents?</b></i>
Question 3 <i><b>Will this enable SBC to plan future development within the borough?</b></i>
Question 4 <i><b>Does this reflect both National and Local Agendas?</b></i>
Question 5 <i><b>What else should be included?</b></i>

### **Feedback**

The point was raised that land is at a premium in the borough thus organic growth will start to be a problem. SBC will have to think of different methods of providing A/H.

SBC cannot meet their AH liability within the existing land opportunities, and SBC will eventually need to consider using green belt which would provide cheaper housing.

The discussed the definition of A/H – what does it mean to be affordable in the current times of economic uncertainty?

It was noted that all the aims are important in their own way – delivering affordable housing, improving existing stock promoting accessibility to different types of housing are equally important and interconnected.

Off site contributions were discussed. SBC needs to discuss S106 and the options for off site contributions with developers. These areas also need to be covered in the Housing Strategy and formulas identified within the DPD.

The new affordable rent model will need to be a big change for RP's and will need to be monitored. This again will need to be covered in the strategy.

Some PR's are concerned about how well this will work.

The office blocks on Victoria Avenue are a key to retaining young people. On the continent and in metropolitan areas, apartment living is rife and there needs to be a change. The group also discussed mixed-use scheme and the demands and need for retail units. Do SBC know the need for retail units? A look around the town shows a number of new retail units that are not occupied. There needs to be cohesion between retail and housing through the employment land review for example.

There also needs to be a joined up role for SBC across the housing remit. Planners, assets housing need to work with each other to bring forward housing in the borough with a longer-term approach. The current joint working between the council departments needs to be much more visible and the strategy must show the cohesive overview of the borough and the aims. Planning and housing policies much be closely linked.

## **Aim 2- Improving the quality of existing housing stock achieving Decent, Healthy & Environmentally Sustainable homes across all tenures**

### **Outline strategic vision for council owned stock**

- Outline asset management opportunities available as a result of any future reform of the Housing Revenue Account
  - Tower Block renewal- outline improvement programme for the 13 council owned tower blocks in the town including priority sites
  - Strategic review of sheltered accommodation to better reflect needs of current and future residents
  - Strategic Review of council owned garage sites
  - Explore opportunities for retirement village style areas (*Peartree Close*)

### **Achieving and maintaining Decent Homes Standards across all social housing in Borough**

- Decent Homes programme improvements continuing for council owned stock
- Investigate position for other Social Housing Providers

### **Continue to encourage improvement of Private Rented stock through delivery of Private Sector Renewal Strategy Action Plan**

- Continue to reduce number of empty homes, EDMOs etc.
- Improving energy efficiency of private sector stock,
- Improve the standards of HMOs through licensing and cooperation with landlords
- Introduce Selective Licensing scheme
- Expand Landlords Accreditation Scheme

### **Increase the environmental and sustainability standards of new-build and existing properties**

- Pursue opportunities for grant/loan improvement to existing stock through retro-fitting eg CESP, ERDF, RHI and CERT

### **Social housing landlords to provide Value for Money services which are rated as excellent by residents**

- Ensure social housing providers are prepared for transition of social housing regulation from TSA to HCA

Question 5 ***Does this reflect the joint working required to ensure housing in Southend is appropriate to meet current & future***

<i>need?</i>
Question 6 <b><i>Will the outcomes give the strategic direction required by local housing providers to inform their future planning?</i></b>
Question 7 <b><i>What else should be included?</i></b>

### **Feedback**

They may have to look at different ways of working with the private sector or different ways of looking at empty homes or retrofitting properties.

SBC cannot just look to new build properties they will have to look at analysing their stock and working with SEH at a more strategic approach to housing.

In terms of local need, young people need to be kept in the area and there needs to be sufficient accommodation for students.

The university is expanding and SBC will need to be aware of the HMO's & the standards that these will be at.

The workshop then discussed the issue of decent homes and retrofitting properties. Mike Gatrell explained the figures for non decent homes and the recent allocation of Decent Homes funding. The current level of non decent homes is 25% however it is envisaged that by 2013 the figure will be 10%. The tower blocks were another topic of discussion for the group. There are 13 in the borough with 2 x 9 story blocks as well. MG gave a bit of background to the tower blocks and some of the issues that they have. It was raised that SBC need to do something with these units and there are a number of possibilities from using them for residential care or sheltered accommodation to selling them to a developer. The town centre blocks are in an excellent location with good transports links and views however there may be issues surrounding the decanting of these properties.

### **Aim 3- Promoting greater accessibility to different types of housing and independent living for vulnerable groups, working to prevent homelessness**

#### **Review of Allocations Policy to better match local needs**

- Review of Choice Based Lettings allocations system
- Explore methods to meet housing need whilst providing greater priority for working households and local residents
- Clearer definition between homeseekers in need to move and those with aspiration to do so in order to target services accordingly
- Introduction of Local Letting Policies

#### **Continue to improve the effectiveness of Homeless Prevention support in the town**

- Develop Homeless Prevention implementation plan?
- Understand the impact of proposed changes to the welfare system and in particular housing benefit/local housing allowance on the local housing market and develop action plan to ensure local residents have access to suitable housing.

**Close working with clients and commissioners to ensure a suitable range of housing options provided for vulnerable adults**

- Communicating (to planning, developers and builders etc) the specific needs of individuals with specialist housing requirements and ensuring their provision alongside General Needs affordable housing.
- Work with providers of specialist housing to achieve the correct mix of accommodation type and tenures for Southend's future needs in line with wider Health and Social Care aims
- Continued improvement and development of Supporting People programme as part of delivery of suitable housing options for vulnerable residents

Question 8 <b><i>Will this information enable you to meet needs for you, your clients and residents?</i></b>
Question 9 <b><i>To what extent will this information ensure our residents health is improved?</i></b>
Question 10 <b><i>Will the outcomes give a robust overview of the future resident base for the borough?</i></b>
Question 11 <b><i>What else should be included?</i></b>

**Feedback**

The population is also ageing and this also needs to be taken into account. Do SBC know the numbers and needs of older people and other groups of vulnerable adults?

SBC talk about reducing numbers in residential but currently do not publish what we want or type of accommodation required instead.

Developers need to be aware of the tenure mix that is required by the borough and the housing strategy needs to address this. A point was also raised as to needs for different parts of the borough. Obviously the a/h threshold is larger on larger sites however the location of the site could be taken into account. For example town centre sites would more likely be 1-2 bed units and this be suitable however more suburban areas would call for larger units.

There will be no new SP monies so how will the council be able to support vulnerable groups.