

HOUSING STRATEGY 2011 – 2015 ACTION PLAN

PRIORITY 1 – DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Priority 1a) A local development framework is in place that delivers a range of market and affordable housing to meet a spectrum of need.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Ensure LDF/Core Strategy provides an appropriate policy framework	Housing developers, land owners	2026. Reviewed on an annual basis to ensure progress is being made	Consultation with the Spatial Policy and Development Management teams and other stakeholders has resulted in the following policies being included in the Local Plan which is currently under consultation: DM23 – Housing Mix DM24 – Affordable Housing DM25 – Local needs housing DM26 – Gypsy, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople accommodation
Engage with the Spatial Policy and Development Management teams to bring forward the delivery of new housing	Housing developers, land owners	2026. Reviewed on an annual basis to ensure progress is being made	New email inbox set up to ensure that all relevant planning applications are notified from Development Management for Housing to make comments on. New affordable completions are: 2011/12 – 284 2012/13 – 244 2013/14 – 180 2014/15 – 163

Priority 1b) The long-term balance of the housing market in the borough is improved to reflect local need and demand including an increase in the supply of affordable rented and shared ownership homes.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Draft a Tenancy Strategy for the Borough in full consultation with partner Registered Providers(RPs) and other stakeholders	West Kent LIP Partnership, RPs, developers Action for Rural Communities in Kent HCA, KHG, RSLs	December 2011	The Council's tenancy strategy for 2011 - 2015 was published in December 2011 after consultation with stakeholders. The strategy is being updated to reflect the council's position on the granting of non-secure tenancies, now that the council have stock to accommodate homeless persons such as Magnolia House.
Bring forward LIP Phase 1 sites	HCA RPs West Kent LIP Partnership West Kent Development Forum	March 2015	The West Kent LIP was adopted in December 2010. A total of 7 of the 8 Phase 1 sites have been completed, delivering 128 affordable units, against an original target of 106.

<p>Consider /research formation of housing delivery vehicle e.g. Local Housing Company link to Kent & Medway strategy</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>Research has been undertaken into formation of such a vehicle and CLT have approved continued progress with respect to setting up a local housing company. Housing are working with colleagues in property, legal, economic development and finance on this.</p> <p>The Council now has Registered Provider and Investment Partner status with the Homes and Communities Agency and can apply for grant directly to enable the delivery of affordable housing.</p> <p>The council has already purchased property such as Aylesbury and Magnolia House. Further property land/purchases are being explored to help meet strategic housing objectives. as possible further purchases. Also the potential to tap in to institutional investment is being explored with the LGA.</p>
<p>Review the Affordable Housing SPD through the emerging Core Strategy</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>September 2013</p>	<p>Work on the new draft Affordable Housing SPD will start during 2015/16. Key issues have already been identified which need to be covered within the document. Once the new Local Plan is adopted, consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken before the revised SPD is adopted.</p>

Priority 1c) The housing and related needs of people in rural areas are addressed.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Ensure LDF/Core Strategy provides an appropriate policy framework for rural housing	Action for Rural Communities in Kent. Registered Providers. Parish Councils. HCA	10 affordable homes on rural exception sites by June 2013.	Schemes completed: 18 units – Ashford Drive, Kingswood – May 2011 12 units – North Street, Sutton Valence – Dec 2011 25 units – Grigg Lane, Headcorn – April 2013 8 units – South Street Road, Stockbury – Oct 2013
Ensure all rural parishes where a rural exception site is feasible and/or deliverable have had a rural housing needs survey completed.	As above	April 2015	Our service agreement with ACRK remains at 1 survey per year. A survey for Marden was completed in 2012/13 for Coxheath in 2013/14 and East Farleigh in 2014/15.

Priority 1d) The housing needs of the gypsy and traveller community are addressed.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Ensure LDF/Core Strategy provides an appropriate policy framework to address the needs of the gypsy and traveller community	Spatial Policy HCA RPs	December 2011	Policy DM26 in the emerging Local Plan highlights the needs for this section of the community and is currently under consultation
Start development of a rural affordable housing scheme.	As above	December 2013	A total of 114 sites went through a planning assessment process to determine their suitability for a public gypsy site. A shortlist of 11 sites were identified for further work/consideration. The favoured site fell through at the last moment due to the withdrawal of the site by the landowner. An alternative site has been identified and survey/design work has been completed to enable the submission of a planning application, following appropriate consultation.

Bid to the HCA's Traveller Pitch Fund	RP, HCA, KCC	September 2011	<p>Successful bid submitted for £1,365,000 to deliver 15 units by March 15. Due to aforementioned loss of previous site, and ecology issues with new identified site, delivery by March 2015 was not possible. Grant allocation has been handed back to HCA. Funding options paper will be produced for Cabinet to consider alternative funding options going forward which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Re-bid to the HCAb) MBC Capitalc) Borrowingd) Institutional investment
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PRIORITY 2 – INCREASE CHOICE AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Priority 2a) The elderly and disabled are able to live in their homes for longer rather than being admitted to hospital or nursing care.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Review the role of the HIA in the delivery of Mandatory DFGs	HIA HCA Supporting People Team	October 2011	The HIA is procured by KCC supporting people. Maidstone Borough Council has no contractual obligation to provide the service.

Priority 2b) Homelessness in Maidstone is reduced.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
<p>Work with Kent Social Services to jointly commission new forms of temporary accommodation and provide long-term solutions to youth homelessness</p>	<p>Joint Policy & Planning Board; KCC; housing providers</p>	<p>Review annually</p>	<p>No joint working has achieved temporary accommodation for youth homelessness. Referrals made to Trinity Foyer or Lilysmith House are still the only available accommodation in Maidstone for this age group. Referrals also made for Infozone and Connexions to assist with applications for Job Centre, training opportunities and advice.</p> <p>Joint Assessments are carried out on every 16/17 year old that approaches as homeless, protocol is established with children's services to assist and advise and work with families where possible for them to return home but no wrap around service is available in Maidstone if a CIN is not established.</p> <p>Joint work with KCC had started; however, they are now undergoing a restructure so this work is on hold until later in the year. A meeting has now been set up later this month (Oct 15) with St Basils, who are funded by DCLG to reduce youth homelessness, KCC and us to look at renewing the joint protocol for care leavers</p>

Priority 2c) Housing solutions are implemented that help reduce incidences of offending and reoffending.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Work with the Offender Management Unit to implement their action plan to reduce reoffending	JPPB sub group on offenders & housing; Kent Probation; Youth Offender Service; outreach services	September 2012	<p>Ex offender funding available to allow access to the private sector market; deposit and 1 months' rent available. The funding is being utilised where appropriate.</p> <p>Referral to support services should there be a need with each case assessed individually.</p> <p>The Probation Service has just undergone significant changes recently and meetings have been held with the two new area managers from the service to look at joint working. A working group has been established to refresh the offender protocol.</p>

Priority 2d) The percentage of people suffering repeated incidents of domestic abuse is reduced.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Assist the SMP in developing and delivering an action plan to support victims of domestic violence	Safer Maidstone Partnership	March 2012	The Domestic Abuse Strategy and Action Plan was introduced in April 2013 covering the period 2013 - 2018

PRIORITY 3 – IMPROVE OUR EXISTING HOMES

Priority 3a) Homeowners and private landlords are encouraged and supported to maintain and repair their homes; the grant programme is targeted to achieve community benefit e.g. nomination rights.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Engage small landlords to work with the council to improve the condition and management of their property through the accreditation scheme	MBC Change & Improvement Team KCC OT Bureau	October 2011	Landlords in the Borough are encouraged to join the Kent Landlord accreditation scheme. Discounts are given to accredited Landlords for licensing HMO's. The scheme is advertised on the Council's website and verbally by officers
Start an annual Landlords Forum	National Landlords Association	March 2012	Landlord forums are now held bi-annually

Priority 3b) Use of existing stock is maximised by empty homes being brought back into use.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Update the Empty homes strategy	No Use Empty initiative	March 2012	The Empty Homes strategy was updated in early 2013 for the period 2013 – 2015

PRIORITY 4 – IMPROVE ACCESS TO HOUSING ADVICE AND WORK TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING IN MAIDSTONE

Priority 4a) There is an improvement in the quality and range of information relating to advice services that result in more households being prevented from becoming homeless.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Review our use of IT in the provision of housing advice.	Kent Home choice Housing DCLG stakeholder	September 2012	Changes to Locata Systems Homeless Module enable applications to be processed and advice given face to face, in writing, by text message or email. On line Housing Register applications through Kent Home Choice. Home exchange service through Kent Home Choice for those currently housed in social housing; exchanges can be made across counties. Website updated and Home Guide being implemented this year which will provide information online.

<p>Review how we can improve the accessibility of our housing options services.</p>	<p>Porchlight, Shelter, Connexions, Day Centre, Social services</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>Providing improved IT services making assistance and advice accessible to all. Joint working with our statutory and voluntary partners. Partners working within the Gateway alongside our housing team. Housing team available to attend meetings for family assessments with our partners. Joint working with Job Centre and Housing Benefit</p> <p>The triage system was implemented in October 2014, meaning advisors have been seeing those in greatest need. The volume of homeless applicants has impacted the ability to undertake preventions and outreach work.</p>
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Priority 4b)

Work to prevent homelessness and end the need to sleep rough in Maidstone.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Work with our partners to increase the effectiveness of the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme	Housing Benefit, CAB, National Landlords Association, Maidstone Landlords Forum	March 2012	Rent Deposit Bond scheme is now replaced by the Homefinder scheme which was launched in October 2013. This includes the Homefinder Bond and Homefinder incentive schemes.
Develop and promote a Private Homeowner Incentive Scheme	KCC, KHOG	December 2011	The Homefinder incentive offer was introduced in 2013 offering Landlords a payment of £2,500 in return for nomination rights for the property for a 3 year period. The offer is currently under review.

Priority 4c) Access to affordable housing is improved and the range of housing options available to applicants is increased.

What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date	Update
Review the housing allocation scheme	Kent Homechoice Housing stakeholders Service users	May 2012	New Housing Allocation scheme introduced in April 2013. Review of new scheme undertaken and updated in June 2014 and 2015.
Develop Maidstone's approach to the Kent-wide Single Assessment Scheme	As above	October 2011	This replaced the JARP that was previously used by West Kent Housing authorities. As the Council has moved to a banding system the use for this scheme is now rarely required. The Kent Agency Assessment document has now superseded this scheme and is used by all 12 housing authorities in Kent.
Review whether Choice Based Lettings is still the best way of people accessing social housing	As above	October 2011	Undertaken as part of the introduction of the new housing allocations policy that was introduced in April 2013.