Oxford City Council

Regional Homelessness Champions 2008

Housing Strategy 2008 to 2011

"More Housing for Oxford, Better Housing for All."

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Executive Summary

There is an ongoing housing crisis in Oxford. This was true when our last housing strategy was produced in 2005 and the problems of supply and affordability that are familiar to us in Oxford have been exacerbated and are now common across the country and have been recognised in national housing policy.

This strategy shows how we plan to make the most of the opportunities in Oxford for the next three years. In the longer term, we want to be more ambitious in closing the gap between housing need and supply and will use this plan period to work out how we can do this.

Very high demand for housing from a growing population and increasing numbers of households combined with a severely restricted bank of land to develop housing on has led to acute problems of affordability in all tenures, a homelessness crisis and unprecedented demand for affordable rented housing.

The City is a densely packed urban space covering 46 sq km (29 sq miles) with very high levels of housing density. There are severe pressures on housing stock, with large concentrations of homes in multiple occupation and significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. Some areas of the City suffer multiple levels of deprivation; low skills, low incomes, and high levels of crime.

The strategy takes a broad view of the full range of housing issues in Oxford, including homelessness and the Council's own housing stock. More detailed descriptions and plans for these aspects are set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2011, the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, and, the Private Sector; BME and Older Persons Housing strategies.

In Chapters 1 and 2 we look at how a range of local, regional and national housing policies and strategies inform this Strategy and explain how it has been developed.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 we explain the three central themes to this strategy:

- Meeting housing need in Oxford;
- Helping vulnerable people, and;
- Improving the housing stock and services and supporting communities.

In Chapters 6 and 7 we describe how plans will be laid for the future development of housing services in Oxford, outline the financial situation and explain how this strategy will be implemented and monitored.

In Chapter 8 we set out the Strategic Housing Action Plan which maps out the main elements of work to meet the proposed aims and objectives of this strategy.

The Council's priorities for the City are:

- Reduce inequality through social inclusion
- Provide more housing for Oxford, better housing for all
- Improve Oxford's environment, economy and quality of life
- Reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour
- Tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management
- Ensure more efficient and improved services
- Be an open, intelligent and responsive organisation.

Aims

The Housing Strategy 2008 to 2011 aims to ensure housing:

- Meets needs and offers choice;
- Is affordable;
- Is high quality;
- Reflects the City's diversity;
- Is delivered in partnership, and;
- Is managed efficiently.

Objectives

The objectives of this Housing Strategy are to continue to:

Meet Housing Need in Oxford:

1. Provide more affordable housing to meet current and future needs in and around the City.
2. Prevent and reduce homelessness.

Help Vulnerable People:

3. Address the housing needs of vulnerable people and tackle social exclusion.

Improve the housing stock and services and support communities:

4. Improve the quality of the existing housing stock across the City;
5. Improve housing services, choice and quality of life on estates;

Plan for the future:

6. Improve our understanding of housing needs to develop and implement housing strategy, and;
7. Ensure housing services offer value for money.

1 CHAPTER 1: Strategic Overview

1.1 This strategy sits within a framework of policy across the City, the county, the South East region and national housing priorities. It is within this framework that activities for delivering housing and other service priorities are shaped.

1.2 Many of the challenges that face Oxford cannot be solved by the City Council alone. Therefore it works with many organisations to deliver and enable services for the people of Oxford. The Council believes that working with partner agencies is essential to ensure the delivery of the best services possible to meet the needs of local communities in the most cost effective way. In particular we recognise the huge contribution that voluntary and community groups make in Oxford.

1.3 Housing has been identified as a key priority area for the Council, the City, the County and region as a whole. The need for additional affordable housing is stated as a priority in the Local Area Agreement, the Oxford Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's own Corporate Plan.

1.4 An overview of these strategic partnerships in relation to housing services in the City is given in figure 1 below. This shows how the Council is working collectively to deliver improved housing services and meet housing needs. These strategic links are explained in more detail in Appendix 2.

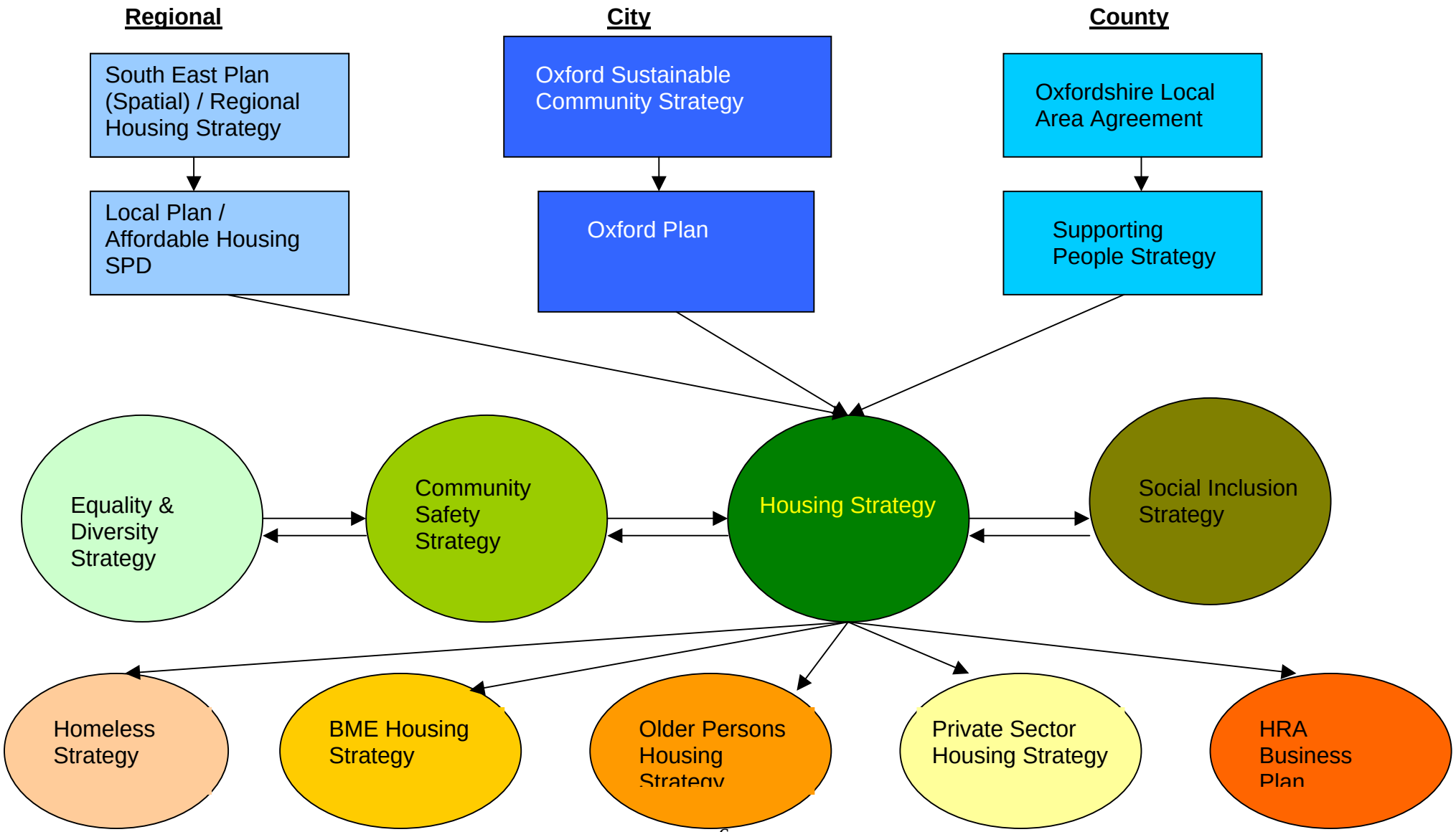
1.5 Meeting National Housing Priorities

1.6 The Council is working to ensure that local and sub-regional priorities are aligned with national housing policy priorities to make the most effective use of local and national resources. This housing strategy strongly reflects the key national housing policy priorities of providing additional affordable housing to meet local need and to deliver on growth points; tackling affordability and improving access to housing; preventing homelessness; improving housing conditions; meeting the needs of vulnerable people and making efficient use of existing housing resources.

1.7 In October 2006 the Government named Oxford as one of 29 towns and cities confirmed as New Growth Points, with the potential to deliver up to 100,000 extra new homes over the next ten years. It is proposed that and additional 5,692 new homes will be built in Oxford.

1.8 Certain national policy priorities are not relevant directly to Oxford and these include housing market renewal in areas where there is low demand and the provision of housing in rural areas as there is not any significant rural settlement within the City's boundaries.

Figure 1: Strategic Housing Framework (Summary Diagram)



2 CHAPTER 2: Strategy Development

2.1 In developing this strategy we have taken into account the evolving national policy framework for housing, progress against the previous Strategic Housing Action Plan (SHAP 2005-08) and the views of partners and stakeholders to produce a set of relevant and realistic objectives.

2.2 Information on current and planned activity within the Council was gathered and linked with new information from the Census updates, survey data, government guidance and recent service reviews. These were considered in the context of the Council's financial position to establish local priorities.

2.3 The Housing Strategy 2005-2008 was reviewed on a regular basis by the Strategic Housing in Oxfordshire Partnership (SHOP). The last review was in Autumn 2007 and details of progress and achievements are summarised below and are shown in more detail in appendix 5.

2.4 Review of the 2005-08 Housing Strategy.

2.5 The headline successes of the nine objectives of the preceding housing strategy are listed here with further detail in Appendix 5.

2.5.1 Increase the supply of housing for people in need

- 551 (net) new affordable homes have been provided in the City (2004/05 to 2006/07).
- 100% of new homes built on brown field land 2006/07.
- Affordable housing planning target enacted.

2.5.2 Improve the affordability of housing in Oxford

- Detailed Housing Market Assessment undertaken.

2.5.3 Increase opportunities for choice and mobility within the housing stock

- Oxford Register of Affordable Housing (ORAH) established 2006.
- Choice Based Lettings (CBL) launched 2008.
- Success of Homechoice scheme with over 600 households assisted.

2.5.4 Improve the condition of Housing in Oxford

- HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) licensing introduced
- On track to meet HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) targets by 2010
- On target to meet decent homes standard (at 84% for 2007/08)

2.5.5 Reduce homelessness in Oxford

- Households living in temporary accommodation reduced by 45%.
- Number of homelessness acceptances reduced by 47%
- Reduction in level of rough sleeping

2.5.6 Improve housing and support services for all those who need to use them.

- Physical improvements to temporary accommodation
- Improved tenant satisfaction
- Support services provided and funding reviewed.

2.5.7 Improve the environment on estates and in areas of decline

- Street warden service extended.
- CANAcT (Crime and Nuisance action team) reducing anti-social behaviour and preventing homelessness
- Redevelopment of Rose Hill underway.

2.5.8 Develop housing strategy and policy to support service improvement

- Clear affordable housing focus in community and corporate strategies.
- Suite of housing strategies for BME (black and minority ethnic), Older Persons and Private Sector.
- Development of core strategic housing service function.

2.5.9 Address the financial pressures on the Council for housing related services.

- Review of HRA (Housing Revenue Account) following stock options appraisal.
- Ongoing and additional Government grant funding for homelessness services.
- Reduction in cost of homelessness services.

2.6 Research

2.7 The Council is using existing information better and has invested in research where we did not have enough evidence of local needs and conditions (for example the Housing Market Assessment and Balance of Dwellings Study). All statistics quoted in this strategy are from public sources or locally commissioned research, principally the 2006 Census updates, the Council's returns to Communities and Local Government (CLG), including the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices and quarterly homelessness returns, stock condition data, housing needs surveys and housing market assessments.

2.8 We are using this improved knowledge to set out our priorities in this new housing strategy, consulting widely to ensure it reflects the right

issues and priorities and building partnerships to help deliver the strategy.

2.9 Consultation

2.10 In preparing this strategy we worked with tenants, residents, partner organisations, Councillors and Council officers.

2.11 Wide-ranging consultation has been undertaken to get the views of as many people and organisations as possible to inform the development of this strategy (and the accompanying homelessness strategy), with a particular emphasis on service users and partners. The main consultation activities carried out were:

- Resident questionnaire via the City Council's Talkback Panel.
- Service user questionnaires for people in temporary accommodation, users of homelessness and housing options services and Council and RSL (Registered Social Landlord) tenants including those on the waiting list.
- Questionnaires to partner organisations (RSLs, voluntary sector, etc).
- Focus groups (service users, Community Housing staff and managers and partner organisations).
- Meetings with members.
- Partners / Stakeholder conference (13th February 2008).

2.12 The results of the main consultation activities are summarised in Appendix 1. Key points to note which have informed this strategy are:

2.12.1 The main areas of concern for housing in Oxford were:
- o High house prices and rents
- o Lack of affordable rented housing for families and singles & couples.
- o Long waiting lists for affordable rented homes.
- o Street homelessness or rough sleeping.

2.12.2 Peoples priorities for addressing these problems were:
- o Build more family sized (3+ bedrooms) and smaller (1 or 2 bedrooms) homes to meet demand.
- o Build new homes in or immediately around the City, and;
- o Build more homes away from the City in surrounding towns.
- o The responses for the latter two options varied between respondent type with the Talkback Panel opting, by a very slight margin only (1%), in favour of 'away from the City', and service users opting by a large margin for 'in or near the City'.

2.12.3 Specific issues raised by respondents included:
- o More and better housing services for young people.
- o Affordability of private rented housing for those in work.
- o Ensure there are good links between housing and support for vulnerable people.
- o The condition of housing (public or private sector).

2.13 The strategy has also been subject to consultation as a draft including approval by Council, Scrutiny Committee and wider consultation with a range of Council and partner, community groups and organisations prior to final publication.

2.14 Working with partners

2.15 By working with partners we contribute to and develop sub-regional priorities with the main aim of developing quicker, more efficient ways of delivering affordable, decent housing and other housing services.

2.16 We understand that people do not restrict their housing choices to administrative areas and that, acting alone, we can only make a limited contribution to improving the supply, condition and quality of housing. It is therefore vital that the Council explores opportunities inside and outside the City to develop relevant partnerships that can achieve this. The Council has built up partnerships within Oxford and across the county and region.

2.17 Locally

2.18 The Council develops and maintains partnerships and builds up expertise that enables us to influence regional and national policy for the benefit of Oxford and to meet government objectives. Central to this are the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP), and the Strategic Housing in Oxford Partnership (SHOP). The OSP (a Local Strategic Partnership) was established in February 2003 and published its first Community Strategy in June 2004. A new Sustainable Community Strategy is being published in 2008 to follow on from the first plan.

2.19 The new Sustainable Community Strategy has identified affordable housing as a key flagship issue. An early part of the OSP's work to meet the challenge of this priority area has been to establish an Affordable Housing Select Committee which will report on its findings on how best to support and enable additional affordable housing provision in the City during 2008. This work will directly support the LAA1 (Local Area Agreement) core target of delivering additional affordable housing to meet needs.

2.20 Regionally

2.21 We work closely with neighbouring district Councils and Oxfordshire County Council although there are inevitably tensions due to urban / rural and political differences.

2.22 Joint working takes place at all levels: strategic and operational housing liaison, homelessness strategy development and training, joint commissioning of services for private sector renewal and housing

advice. For example, 'Beacon Council' status was achieved by all the Oxfordshire Councils for their joint work on Supporting People.

2.23 These links were strengthened when Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Members Group (OMAHG) was established in 2003, now the Oxfordshire Housing Partnership (OHP). Senior Councillors from each district and the County Council meet regularly to tackle housing issues more effectively by working together.

2.24 The OHP commissioned a sub-regional housing market area assessment which will be published in 2008 and has influenced the development of this strategy. We see this as a basis for collaboration on meeting housing need, developing affordable housing, developing a sub-regional strategy and an opportunity to meet CLG requirements to assess the needs of gypsies and travellers countywide.

2.25 The Council also plays an active part in Oxfordshire Partnership (OP, the county-wide Local Strategic Partnership) in implementing and developing the LAA, which has identified affordable housing as a high priority, stimulated debate and raised awareness of issues, particularly in relation to homelessness. The structure of the City and countywide partnerships is shown at Appendices 2 & 4 .

2.26 Summary of Positive Outcomes From Partnership Working.

Activity / Issue	Partnership	Outcome
Joint work between Councils and RSLs in Oxford on strategic housing issues	Strategic Housing in Oxford Partnership (SHOP)	Single Homeless and Family Homeless sub-groups meet quarterly to review and drive implementation of joint services for these client groups.
Joint work between the City Council, County Council and Youth Offending on young persons homelessness.	Joint Housing Team	Improved targeting of shared resources on addressing high levels of homelessness among young people (under 25s)
Increasing land supply for affordable housing	Oxford Strategic Partnership	Housing objectives included in Community Strategy and Affordable Housing select Committee
Joint housing register.	ORAH	More efficient letting of affordable housing in the City.
Housing market assessment	Joint commissioning with all local Councils (OHP)	Comprehensive housing market assessment of Oxfordshire housing sub-market to inform housing and planning matters.
Choice Based Lettings	CBL Partnership / ORAH	Choice based lettings launched in City and being developed for sub-region.
Develop good practice; make a common case for urban housing issues in	Cities In the South East Housing Group (CISE)	CISE formally recognised as a consultee on the Regional Housing Strategy; making case

the region		for funding from Regional Housing Board.
Recommissioning housing related support services.	Supporting People	Range of housing related support services in the City and county recommissioned. Including Domestic Violence refuges, hostel accommodation, move-on accommodation and floating support.

2.27 Our improved knowledge and understanding and feedback from residents and partners tell us that the eight main housing objectives for Oxford are to:

1. Provide more affordable housing to meet current and future needs in and around the City.
2. Prevent and reduce homelessness.
3. Address the housing needs of vulnerable people and tackle social exclusion.
4. Improve the quality of the existing housing stock across the City;
5. Improve housing services, choice and quality of life on estates;
6. Improve our understanding of housing needs to develop and implement housing strategy, and;
7. Ensure housing services offer value for money.

2.28 The housing priorities are described in more detail in the coming chapters and the actions that will be taken to deliver them are identified in the Action Plan (Chapter 8).

3 CHAPTER 3: Meeting Housing Need in Oxford

3.1 Very high demand for housing from a growing population and increasing numbers of households combined with a severely restricted bank of land to develop housing on has led to acute problems of affordability in all tenures, a homelessness crisis and unprecedented demand for affordable rented housing.

3.2 The City is a densely packed urban space covering 46 sq km (29 sq miles) with very high levels of housing density. There are severe pressures on housing stock, with large concentrations of homes in multiple occupation and significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. Some areas of the City suffer multiple levels of deprivation; low skills, low incomes, and high levels of crime.

3.3 Population and Housing in Oxford

3.4 Population

3.4.1 The City's population is growing. The 2001 census recorded the City's population at 135,500[1] but the 2006 estimate stated the population had increased to 149,100[2]. Oxford has a young population with two thirds of the population aged under 40 and just 15% aged over 60[3]. See Table 1 for further detail.

Table 1: Oxford's Population 2006.

Age range	Population (1000's)	% of Population
0 – 19 years	39.2	22.1%
20 to 29 years	43	28.8%
30 to 39 years	21.7	14.6%
40 to 59 years	29.8	20%
60 to 74 years	12.8	8.6%
75 years +	8.9	6%

3.4.2 The City has a very ethnically diverse population. In the 2001 Census, Oxford was estimated to have a black and ethnic minority (BME) population of 12.9% compared with 8.7% in England and Wales. The ethnic diversity among young people is especially high, at 19.8% of under-16s (in 2001). The impacts of this aspect of the City's population are discussed in detail in the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy 2006/07.

3.4.3 Oxford has a large population of students. Over 25,000 attend Oxford and Oxford Brookes Universities each year. This places pressure on housing supply in the City, particularly the private rented sector with many of the students living out of university provided accommodation

[1] 2001 Census. Office of National Statistics (ONS).
[2] 2006 Population Estimates, ONS.
[3] 2006 Population Estimates, ONS

for part of their study period. It is estimated that up to 10,000 students at any one time occupy 3,000 of the properties in the City. Balancing the demands placed on housing by students and the needs of permanent residents (many of whom are former students or work for the universities) is a challenge for the City.

3.4.4 Oxford is an affluent City but one that contains pockets of severe deprivation. The City ranks 155th (out of 354 local authority areas in England) in terms of overall deprivation (the City's ranking in 2004 was 144th). Notable among the calculations for this, is Oxford's rank of 129th in terms of income deprivation, which highlights extreme income variations in the City.[4]

3.5 Households

3.5.1 The number of households in the City is increasing rapidly. In 1991 there were 45,000 households that had increased to 55,854 by 2006. The number of households in the City is projected to increase to 74,500 by 2026 placing huge pressure on housing.[5] Projected population growth does not match the growth in household formation as a result of trends for more single person households, which is a consequence of more younger people, more very elderly people and higher rates of divorce.

3.5.2 It is projected that the proportion of single person households in the South East region will increase by 21% between 2006 and 2021[6]. This is the largest regional growth in the country. If this is replicated or exceeded in Oxford then pressure of housing will continue to be a serious issue. Smaller and single person households do not necessarily want or demand smaller homes and this is particular challenge when planning for future growth.

3.6 Tenure and Dwellings

3.6.1 Housing provision in Oxford is very diverse by tenure (see Table 2). Oxford has a very large private rented sector (22%), it retains a sizable social rented sector (22%) and the level of owner occupation is among the lowest in the country (56%), which is very low for the South East of England region.[7]

Table 2: Tenure Split in Oxford and Comparisons

	Oxford	**South East**	**England**
Owner Occupation	56.1%	76%	69%
Social rented	21.8%	13.5%	18.4%
Private rented	22.1%	10.5%	12.6%

[4] CLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007. Ranking – 1 being the most deprived, 354 the least.
[5] Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment 2007
[6] Joseph Rowntree Foundation. "Single Person Households and Social Policy" (2006)
[7] Oxford Private Sector Housing Stock Condition survey 2004.

3.6.2 There are 54,546 dwellings in the City with approximately 70% being houses (see Table 3), although many of these are used as HMOs.[8]

Table 3: Dwelling Types in Oxford

Detached	9.8%
Semi-detached	31.6%
Terraced	30.2%
Flats	26.7%
Other	1.8%

3.6.3 There is a large provision of social rented sheltered housing for older people in the City with over 1000 homes in 48 schemes provided by the City Council and housing associations.[9]

3.7 Affordability

3.8 Average house prices in Oxford have increased dramatically in recent years (see Table 4) In 2000 the average house price was £155,346 and this increased by 90% to the year 2006 when the average price was £295,406. 10 Rapid house price inflation continues in the City and prices increased by an additional 13% in 2007. This saw average prices break the £300,000 barrier in the City, rising to £339,404[11]. Overall, Oxford has been identified as the 10th least affordable area to live in the South East region.[12]

Table 4: Average house prices in Oxford

1997	2000	2003	2006	2007
£98,576	£155,346	£247,840	£295,406	£339,404

3.9 There are wide variations in average prices for different types of property (see Table 5) and this has significant effects on the affordability of housing for different groups of people. The situation is particularly acute for people who would be first time buyers; that is singles, couples and families in the age group 20-39.

Table 5: Average house price by property size and type, 2007

1 bed flat	2 bed flat	2 bed house	3 bed flat	3 bed house	4 bed
£174,723	£210,271	£242,109	£343,242	£271,176	£390,753

(Home track, May 2007)

[8] Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007
[9] Older Persons Housing Strategy 2007
[10] Land Registry 2006.
[11] Nationwide House Price Index 2007.
[12] Oxfordshire HMA 2007

3.10 Average household incomes for first time buyer households are below the county, regional and national averages (see Table 6) despite average first time buyer homes being the most expensive in the county. An analysis of house prices in the Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment (HMA) 2007 has shown that the average 'entry level' house prices (lowest quartile averages for all properties and just terraces) in the City are in excess of £200,000 (see Table 7).

Table 6: Average First Time Buyer Household Income.

Locality	Average Income per Year
Oxford	£37,626
Oxfordshire Average	£42,620
South East Average	£41,342
England Average	£38,996

Table 7: Lowest Quartile House Prices 2007.

	Lowest quartile - all properties	Lowest quartile - terraces only
Oxford	£216,700	£220,700
Oxfordshire	£194,900	£218,968

3.11 Owner occupied housing is increasingly out of the reach of people on lower incomes in the City. The ratio between the lowest quartile house price and lowest quartile annual income was 10.86 in 2006, having doubled since 1997 when it was 5.41[13]. Affordability is also a major issue for single income households (typical first time buyer households are joint income). Average household incomes for single income households are around £25,000 in the City and in order to purchase a 2 bed flat that household would have to pay 50% of its income in mortgage costs. The ratio is 60% for a 2-bed house. Both ratios are well above standard affordability ratios of 33% of income[14].

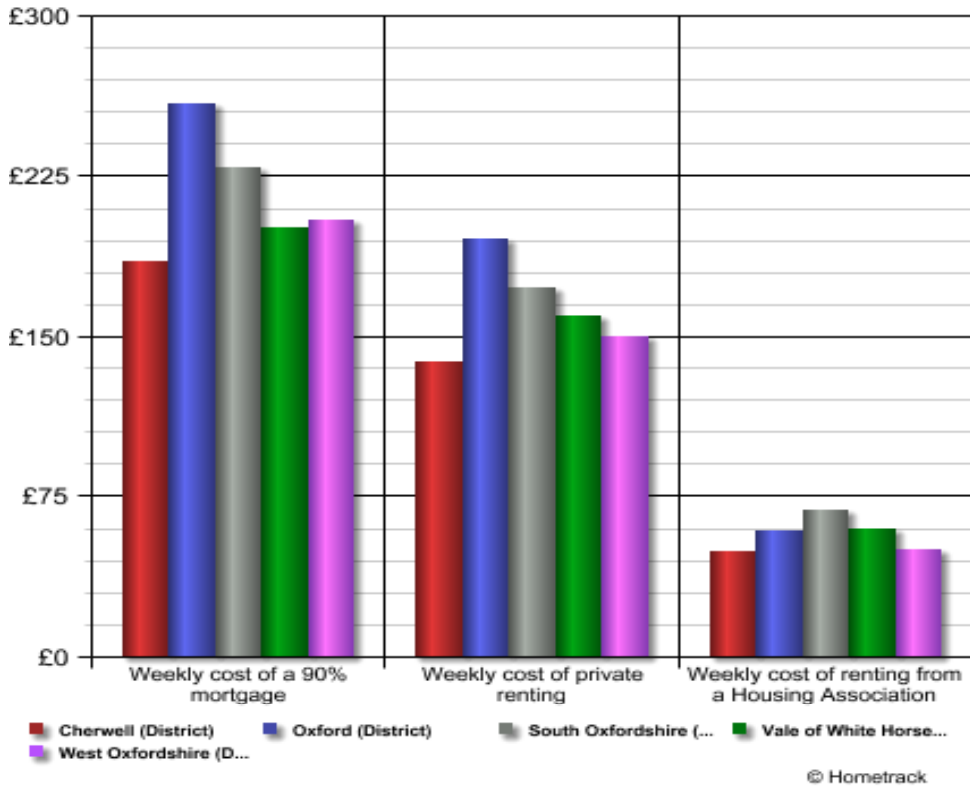
3.12 The HMA 2007 has projected that house prices in Oxford will have to fall by at least 15% before affordability returns for the average household. Even under current uncertain national housing market conditions this level of decline remains unlikely given the robust nature of the City's housing market (Oxford was declared the 3rd most 'bomb-proof' housing market in the country in the Sunday Times (2008)).

3.13 Private renting in Oxford is popular but relatively expensive. Indeed, it can be more expensive to rent a property from the private sector in Oxford than it would be to purchase a property in another part of the county. However, rental costs do tend to be lower than equivalent mortgage costs in the City hence the popularity of the tenure. Renting from a housing association is considerably cheaper than either option in the City. See figure 2.

[13] Oxfordshire HMA 2007
[14] Oxfordshire HMA 2007

Figure 2: Comparative costs of renting & buying a two-bed property May 2007

3.14



3.15 Delivery of Additional Affordable Housing

3.16 The widening gap between housing costs, particularly for owner occupation, and household incomes has resulted in fewer households being able to afford housing in Oxford. In general, this means that a wide range of households need special help to live in a home that meets their needs.

3.17 The groups particularly affected are households in housing need because of their personal circumstances. These can include families increasing in size who need to transfer to a larger property or households that wish to downsize; those who are at risk of offending; those who need to move because of racial harassment or domestic violence; and people with special housing needs because of their health or personal circumstances.

3.18 Oxford's Housing Requirements Study (2004) identified a need for between 1,700 and 1,800 additional affordable dwellings per year (after social housing relets). The City Council's strategic target for all dwelling completions (affordable and market) is 433 dwellings per year which, considering that typically, less than half of these will be affordable is well below the identified affordable housing need per year.

3.19 The Oxfordshire HMA 2007 has reinforced the level of affordable housing need identified for the City. Indeed, the HMA has identified a substantial increase in need for affordable housing taking into account levels of overcrowding in the City. The 2001 census identified 6,100 households living in overcrowded conditions in the City. The HMA has adjusted this figure to take account of the fact that many overcrowded households do not wish to move but even with a 50% deduction for this there exists in the City an additional population of 3050 households in need of better and affordable housing (people don't move when they want to because they cannot afford to do so).

3.20 The HMA has also projected demand for affordable housing forward to 2026 and has identified that countywide the current shortfall is currently around 2,200 homes per year, and that this will rise to 7,500 pa by 2026. Oxford City accounts for 83% to 89% of this need.

3.21 Planning Context

3.21.1 The Oxford Local Plan was adopted in 2005. This set a strategic target for Oxford of 6,500 dwellings over the Plan period which equates to an annual average of 433 dwellings (market and affordable rented combined). This total annual figure has been exceeded (see Table 9) for six of the last seven years and over 50% of the Local Plan target has already been achieved.

3.21.2 The Local Plan requires a minimum of 50% of dwellings to be affordable on residential sites with ten or more dwellings, or on a residential site of a quarter of a hectare. The proportion of the total amount of affordable housing obtained through the planning system in this manner has been between 40% and 50% over the last four years (see Table 8). The overall proportion of affordable housing built is less than 50% as much new housing is built on sites below the planning threshold (see Table 9).

Table 8: Proportion of affordable housing from S106 agreements

2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
43.35%	44.6%	49.2%	40.4%

(OCC Planning Policy Annual Monitoring Report 2006)

Table 9: Net Total and Affordable Housing Completions

Year	Net total dwelling completions	Net affordable dwelling completions	Proportion of total dwellings that are affordable
2001/02	439	71	16.2%
2002/03	267	46	17.2%
2003/04	578	141	25.7%
2004/05	673	186	27.6%
2005/06	943	167	17.7%
2006/07	821	267	32.5%
TOTAL	**3721**	**878**	**23.6%**

(OCC Planning Policy Annual Monitoring Report 2007)

3.21.3 The net increase in affordable housing in the City over the period 2004/05 to 2006/07 was 551 (see Table 10) which while welcome does not meet current and predicted future demand. In 2006/07 255 net affordable homes were delivered is still considerably short of the demand outlined in the Housing Requirements Study 2004 of an additional 1700 affordable dwellings per year, let alone that predicted in the HMA 2007.

Table 10: Affordable housing completions compared with Right to Buy sales 2003/04 to 2006/07

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Total
New RSL rented dwellings	138	113	164	415
New RSL shared ownership dwellings	48	54	103	205
Total new RSL dwellings	186	167	267	620
Right to Buy sales	45	12	12	69
Net increase of affordable housing	141	155	255	551

3.22 Balance of Dwellings

3.22.1 Of the 3,278 dwellings completed in the first 7 years of the Local Plan period over 80% were 1 and 2 bed dwellings[15] (see Table 11). This reflects the number of smaller City centre flat developments and the trend for conversion of larger dwellings to flats. To address this issue and to support Local Plan policy on the balance of dwellings, the Council commenced the production of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in September 2006 with the aim of increasing the proportion of larger homes provided. This will be adopted in 2008.

Table 11: Proportion of dwellings completed that were 1 and 2 beds.

	2005/06	2006/07
Market	93.5%	83.5%
Affordable	89.2%	74.9%
TOTAL	92.7%	80.8%

(OCC Planning Policy Annual Monitoring Report 2006)

3.23 Land Supply

3.23.1 Many areas of Oxford are unsuitable for building due to the risk of flooding and the need to protect and enhance the natural and historic environments, limiting the scope to provide more housing. Planning policies are designed to get maximum benefit from this limited supply of land.

3.23.2 The Council has a target of ensuring at least 95% of all new homes are built on 'brown field' (previously developed) land. This target has been met and for the last three years the proportion has been in excess of 99%. See Table 12.

[15] Oxford City Council Annual Monitoring Report, Planning 2006/07

Table 12: Proportion of Dwellings Built on Brown Field Land.

2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
99.85%	99.43%	100%

3.23.3 The Council is working with partners to ensure that the maximum amount of land is made available for affordable housing, including sources that may not previously have been considered. The only opportunity to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing within the City on brownfield land, in the foreseeable future is the development of the West End area where up to 700 homes are planned.

3.23.4 Small sites exist within Oxford that could potentially be used for housing but are dependent on significant investment in infrastructure. The infrastructure does exist outside the southern boundary of the City to support the construction 4,000 homes. This is on green belt land of low agricultural value and is the most realistic means of meeting the City's housing need in the medium to long term. The Council is working to ensure that the needs of people in desperate housing need are met through the utilisation of this land.

3.23.5 The Council is pursuing options in the Core Strategy to develop housing on 'Reserve Land' sites in the City as another strategy to meet the very high level of need that has been clearly identified.

3.23.6 The Council is supporting a bid to develop one of the new proposed Eco-Towns to the north of the City. This will help deliver more housing for people in need and contribute to the Council's priority of tackling climate change.

3.24 Homelessness

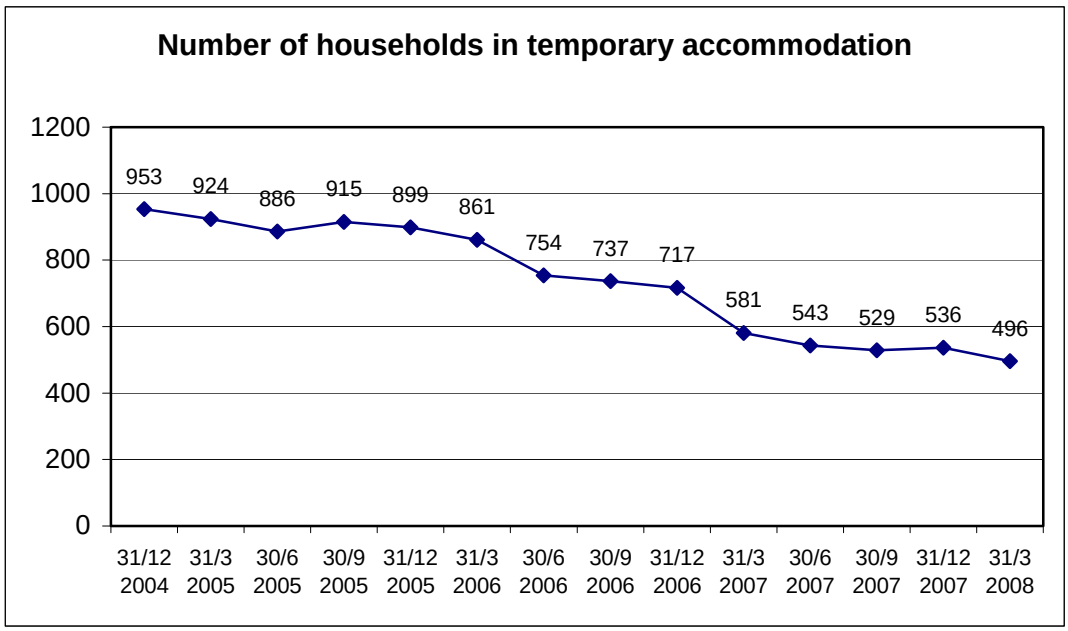
3.25 The main consequence of the affordability and supply crisis for housing in Oxford is homelessness. The Council has been working very hard with its partners to prevent and reduce impact of homelessness. This work has been delivered via the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2003 to 2008.

3.26 The level of homelessness in the City has been reduced in certain key areas. The number of homelessness acceptances by the Council has almost halved over the period of the Homelessness Strategy (see Table 13) as has the number of households living in temporary accommodation (see figure 3).

Table 13: Homelessness Acceptances by Oxford City Council.

2002/03	438
2003/04	382
2004/05	376
2005/06	370
2006/07	233
2007/08	196

Figure 3: Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation.



3.27 These successes have been achieved by a rigorous application of the homelessness prevention agenda which includes making better use of the City's private rented housing stock (over 620 households at risk of homelessness were helped by the Council to secure private rented accommodation over 2005/06 and 2006/07), family mediation, use of discretionary housing benefit payments, the provision of additional affordable housing and more efficient use of existing affordable rented housing in the City (e.g. City Council void property relet times have been reduced from over 100 days to less than 33. (See Table 14).

Table 14: Average re-let times – Oxford City Council properties

2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
102 days	48.74 days	32.65 days

3.28 Prevention work has led to reductions in the length of time homelessness people wait for permanent housing. The average time spent waiting for permanent accommodation for households who have been accepted as homeless has reduced from two years and nine months in 2002/03 to two years three months in 2006/07. The Council

remains concerned that over 40% of homelessness households wait more than two years for permanent housing and is committed to continuing to reduce this wait.

3.29 None the less, the level of homelessness in the City remains high in spite of the achievements of the Homelessness Strategy. Areas of particular concern include:

- Relatively high levels of rough sleeping the City. This has reduced considerably since 1998 when there were 52 rough sleepers, to an average of 8 to 11 in 2006/07 (using the same counting methodology) however this remains an ongoing area of concern as levels of single homelessness remain high.
- High levels of recorded homelessness among households from BME communities (23% of homelessness acceptances and 31% of residents in temporary accommodation).[16]
- The impact of homelessness on young people (over 60% of homelessness acceptances are for people under 25[17]) and people leaving different institutions (e.g. hospitals and prisons).

3.30 Demand for Affordable Rented Housing

3.31 Demand for affordable rented housing in the City is high. As at 1 April 2007 there were 5046 households on the housing register yet for the preceding year there were just 704 lettings made (see Table 15). The situation for family sized accommodation is especially acute as there were only 151 lettings to properties with 3 or more bedrooms and nearly half of all lettings were for one-bedroom homes.

3.32 Table 15: Lettings in 2006/07

Housing Associations	246
Oxford City Council	458
TOTAL	**704**

3.33 The Council works closely with housing associations in the City to ensure that all affordable rented homes are let quickly and that people are offered choice where possible. In 2006 the Council established the Oxford Register of Affordable Housing (ORAH) with the main housing associations to ensure that people in housing need are offered homes through one centralised system. In 2008 the Council launched Choice Based Lettings (CBL) to increase choice for people waiting for homes.

[16] BME Housing Strategy 2007
[17] CLG P1E quarterly returns 2007/08

3.34 Summary of Main Action Points To Meet Housing Need:

Strategic Objective 1: Provide more affordable housing to meet current and future needs in and around the City.

- Deliver an average of 150 affordable new homes each year ensuring that at least 30% are for families (3 bedroom or larger).
- Obtain the maximum possible number of affordable homes through the planning system.
- Continue to lobby for and progress proposals to provide housing on development land around the City.
- Achieve local growth targets set in the local and structure plans and regional housing strategy, meeting LAA targets.
- Monitor housing affordability using local housing market indicators.
- Exploit all opportunities to provide social and other low cost housing in areas of traditional BME settlement. Ensure that social housing mix reflects the needs of the communities seeking to live in the area.
- Remodel Council owned temporary accommodation to permanent homes.
- Increase availability of affordable supported accommodation for single homeless people.

Strategic Objective 2: Prevent and reduce homelessness;

- Increase the range of housing options and services available to prevent homelessness.
- Reduce the numbers of homeless people against key targets.
- Support families in housing need to prevent homelessness.
- Support rough sleepers into settled accommodation and develop clear pathways into permanent homes, training and employment.
- Support vulnerable young people in housing need to prevent homelessness.
- Improve housing options services.
- Identify and address the specific housing needs of different groups in the community who are at risk of homelessness.
- Ensure housing options services offer value for money.

4 CHAPTER 4: Help Vulnerable People

4.1 People become vulnerable and require the assistance of others for a range of reasons. The Council aims to support vulnerable people through working in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies. This chapter describes how we will work to improve housing based support to vulnerable people and also provide broader support to sustain and develop communities.

4.2 Vulnerable People

4.3 Homeless People

4.3.1 The Council's plans for helping homeless people are covered in detail by our Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 13. Below are listed the main ways the Council and its partners help homeless people. The Council's priority for homelessness is prevention as this is better for the families and individuals concerned and makes better use of the Council's resources. The Council has been recognised for the work it is doing to prevent and reduce homelessness with the award of 'Regional Homelessness Champions' status for the South East in 2007.

4.3.2 Families

4.3.2.1 The Council works hard to ensure that families at risk of homelessness are prevented from becoming so. A multi-agency team Families at Risk of Homelessness (FAROH) reviews the situation of families at risk of losing their homes and provides targeted support based on need. This work is ongoing and subject to review and development.

4.3.2.2 One of the biggest issues for family homelessness is the lack of family sized affordable rented homes and consequent long waits for larger housing and overcrowding. In 2006/07 only 15 four bedroom homes became available to let from the Council or the housing associations in the City. The Council operates an incentive scheme designed to encourage people who now under-occupy larger homes to move to a smaller home enabling an over-crowded family to move. This scheme will be continued and developed. When planning the development of new affordable housing the Council will take into account the balance of dwellings in a locality and seek to ensure that appropriate numbers of larger family homes are provided.

4.3.3 Single Homeless People / Rough Sleepers

4.3.3.1 Significant improvements have been made to services provided for single homeless people and rough sleepers in Oxford over the last five years. This includes reductions in the level of rough sleeping with the introduction of the Reconnection Policy, the redevelopment of two of the City's hostels and the development of move-on services for

single people (the City participated in a national Homelessness Link 'Move On Plans Pilot Scheme' (MOPSS) in 2006/07).

4.3.3.2 However, the problem of single homelessness and rough sleeping remains serious with two of the most pressing problems being the lack of available move-on accommodation for single people which blocks beds in the hostels and the lack of suitable services across the county outside of the City which places pressure on City services.

4.3.4 Generally

4.3.4.1 The Council's Homechoice scheme has been a great success in helping prevent homelessness in the City. This scheme makes use of the large private rented sector in the City to enable people (families and singles) at risk of homelessness to access good quality accommodation that meets their needs. More than 500 households at risk of homelessness have been helped by this scheme over the last two years. The Council will continue to develop Homechoice to work more effectively and efficiently so as to help more people in need.

4.4 Young People

4.4.1 The majority of people accepted as homeless by the Council are aged under 25 (64% In 2006/07 and 67% for the first quarter of 2007/08) so young people are a priority group for preventing homelessness.

4.4.2 An innovative partnership between the City, the County Council and the Youth Offending Service has led to the introduction of the 'Joint Housing Team' which works specifically on preventing homelessness among young people, particularly those leaving care or excluded from, or unable to live in, the family home. The team includes staff with expertise in social work, housing and youth work, and is able to offer some housing and support services direct to vulnerable people, or give advice about other provision in the County. The JHT is now working on a three-year plan to address the particular issues of youth homelessness and this is incorporated in the action plan for the Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013.

4.4.3 There are specific services in the City for young homeless people (which include a day centre and a hostel) but these struggle to cope with demand. These services are being reviewed and will be re-commissioned in 2008. The Council would like to see a residential supported accommodation scheme (often referred to as a foyer) developed in the City to provide additional support for homeless young people. This will be actively pursued as part of the Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013.

4.5 Older People

4.5.1 The Council's sheltered housing accommodation in the City has been reviewed for future sustainability and three sites have been identified as in need of redevelopment. Future redevelopment plans include provision of extra care housing for elderly people which is important as the 'very elderly' proportion of the population (those aged 75+) is increasing.

4.5.2 The Council provides a mobile warden service for Council sheltered housing and an emergency call out service for elderly (and disabled) people living in the wider community. The contact centre used for these core services also offers similar contact services for a range of other organisations to assist vulnerable people (such as Telecare for the County Council) and out of hours contact for other Council services. The Council will continue to deliver these services (according to contract) and seek to develop and expand this function.

4.5.3 The Council is participating in a countywide review of elderly services through the Supporting People Partnership. This review is looking at how Supporting People funded services for elderly people will be delivered in the future through a more efficient targeting of resources at needs.

4.6 People with disabilities (physical and mental health)

4.6.1 The Council works with partners to ensure that the housing needs of people with disabilities are addressed. Working with Supporting People a new floating support service for people with mental health problems is being introduced in the City in 2008. This will help people live independently and maintain their tenancies reducing the risk of them coming to harm or becoming homeless.

4.6.2 Emergency call out support is provided by the Council for people with disabilities who wish to use the service (as described under Older People above). The Council ensures that adapted affordable rented homes that become available for letting are prioritised for people with disabilities appropriate to the adaptations or design. Through the new Choice Based Lettings scheme such properties are clearly identified to prospective tenants. When new homes are developed the Council aims to ensure that where appropriate these meet 'Lifetime Homes' standards, which reduces the need for people who have, or develop, disabilities to move out or have adaptations works.

4.6.3 The Council also provides an adaptations service for people with disabilities. This assistance is provided by the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme operated by the Council for people in private sector accommodation or a HRA funded scheme for people in Council homes.

4.7 Victims of Domestic Violence

4.7.1 The City Council provides accommodation for refuges for women fleeing domestic violence and works in partnership across the county to ensure that there is adequate provision of refuges and other support to aid women at risk of domestic violence from all sections of the community. The Council is also working to develop sanctuary schemes, which help women remain safely in their home while protecting them from their abuser. When appropriately used, sanctuary schemes help prevent homelessness for women and their children and reduce the pressure on refuges.

4.8 Minority Communities

4.8.1 The Council has developed a BME Housing Strategy 2006/07 and this is being implemented. Key points form this include developing a better understanding of the housing needs of different communities, reviewing why high numbers of people from BME communities are becoming homeless and working to provide accommodation suitable to local needs (including larger and culturally appropriate homes).

4.9 People with Substance Misuse Problems

4.9.1 Services for people with substance misuse problems are not provided directly by the Council, but via partners working across the City and county. The Council supports some of this work via its homelessness grants programme as it sees this as a key part of the homelessness prevention agenda. The Council is also working with the Supporting People partnership to develop housing related drug recovery services in the county.

4.10 Ex-offenders

4.10.1 Being released from prison without a home to go to is a common cause of homelessness and this is a significant problem in the City. The location of a prison near the City and the high concentration of single homelessness support services in the City combine to emphasise this particular issue. The Council is working with its partners in the City, including the prison and probation services, to address this problem. The Council's reconnection policy for single homeless people sleeping rough is central as this assists people released from prison make connections back to their original location which can help them resettle.

4.11 Summary of Main Action Points To Help Vulnerable People:

Strategic Action 3: Address the housing needs of vulnerable people

- Implement new housing support services for older people following the Supporting People review.
- Implement new floating support service for people with mental health problems in the City
- Undertake feasibility study for learning and support based accommodation scheme for homeless young people (Foyer)
- Improve domestic violence services in the City to reduce harm and risk to women and prevent homelessness.
- Extend the range of provision for elderly persons housing and support including Telecare and Extra Care.
- Develop clearer understanding of the needs of minority groups (BME, gypsies and travelers, gay and lesbian) and develop appropriate services
- Develop and improve support offered to residents in temporary accommodation including support beyond 1st stage.
- Review joint working and partnerships for all vulnerable client groups to improve referral routes and services.

5 CHAPTER 5: Improve the housing stock & services and support communities:

5.1 The condition of a home has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of the people that live in it. By improving the condition and quality of homes in the public and private sector the Council is helping prevent people's lives being blighted by ill-health and reduce the risk of future homelessness as a result. The Council is also committed to helping people live in energy efficient homes which will reduce their fuel bills, helping alleviate poverty, and lowering the individual and collective impact of home energy use on the climate.

5.2 Housing Conditions

5.3 City Council Homes

5.3.1 The City Council has been working on bringing its own housing stock up to the decent homes standard. In 2003 only 49% of the Council's homes were found to be decent and all the stock was expected to fail the standard by 2010 if no remedial action was taken. At the same time it was found that the average energy efficiency rating for Council homes was above average, with an energy efficiency (SAP) rating of 60.[18]

5.3.2 The Council has to ensure that all of its homes meet the decency standard by 2010. In order to decide how to finance and achieve this key target the Council undertook a stock options appraisal, which was completed in 2005/06. The outcome of this was a decision for the Council to retain ownership of its housing stock and to continue to directly manage it. As a result the Council has to directly fund all decent homes works through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Please refer to Appendix 7 and the HRA Business Plan for further detail on this.

5.3.3 Considerable progress has been made towards improving decency and the intervening 2006/07 target of 77% of Council homes achieving the Decent Homes Standard has been met. The target for 2007/08 is 84%. As part of the improvement works to homes led by the decency standard the average energy efficiency rating of the City Council's homes has increased from a SAP rating of 60 in 2003 to 70 in 2006/07.[19]

5.3.4 Meeting the 2010 target of 100% will be very challenging because of the financial pressures on the HRA. The Council is committed to achieving the target and significant improvement in the HRA financial position has been achieved over the last three years. The funding gap is now reduced to circa £6.5 million to achieve the decency deadline of

[18] HRA Business Plan 2006/07
[19] HRA Business Plan 2006/07

2010/11. The Council's main financial challenge during the next four years is to make decisions and find funding for re-modeling of sheltered blocks, together with making decent and undertaking other essential works to both tower blocks and other non-traditional dwellings. These could potentially add a further £18 million to the funding gap. Proposals are being prepared to find a way of carrying out the necessary works by disposing of the least number of assets.

5.4 Decent Homes – Housing Associations

5.4.1 Standards are high in the housing association sector as much of their stock is relatively new. Only 2.2% of housing association stock in the City fails the decent homes standard (2006/07) and the average SAP rating for their dwellings is 71, which is equivalent to that of City Council homes.[20]

5.5 Decent Homes – Private sector

5.5.1 The Council has been working hard to help people who live in private homes (either as owner occupiers or as private renting tenants) to live in better conditions. The Council adopted a Private Sector Housing Strategy (PSHS) in 2007 and this provides substantial detail on activities and plans in this area. Some of the key facts about the private sector identified in the PSHS are detailed below. For further detailed information please refer to the PSHS 2007.

- 78% of housing in Oxford is privately owned (56% is owner occupied and 22% is privately rented).

- 5069 (over 9%) of houses are in multiple occupation; that is shared by people who are not related. Of these over 6% are unfit and 70% do not have adequate fire escape provision. Many of these houses are in East Oxford.

- 3285 dwellings are thought to be below standard (having a category one hazard under the new health and safety rating) mostly due to excessive cold.

- There are approximately 140 homes that have been vacant more than six months. This is lower than the national average but still an important factor given the current housing crisis in the City.

- Many of the most vulnerable people living in poor housing conditions are older people.

5.5.2 The Council has implemented the mandatory HMO licensing scheme to ensure the safety of tenants of these premises and is preparing an additional scheme to cover a wider range of HMO's. To date the

[20] Housing Corporation 2006/07

Council has licensed 345 HMO's out of approximately 800 covered by the mandatory scheme. It is anticipated that a further 1500 HMO's will be covered by the additional scheme once operational.

5.5.3 The Council is committed to helping people improve the quality of their homes but resources are limited and available grants are targeted at vulnerable people on low incomes. The Council provides advice and information services for all residents on improving their homes.

5.5.4 In 2004 it was found that 30.7% of private sector homes were non-decent but that only 30% of vulnerable households lived in non-decent homes, which meant the Council was meeting the national 2010 target in this respect.[21] Nonetheless the Council has continued to work to improve housing conditions for the vulnerable and in 2006/07 grants were provided to 178 households.

5.6 Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty:

5.6.1 Energy efficiency in private sector dwellings is a concern in the City. The average SAP rating for private sector dwellings was 53 in 2004 (compared to 60 in Council homes that year) and 12% of all such dwellings have SAP rating of below 35 which is very poor. [21]

5.6.2 As well as providing an advice service on energy efficiency, maintaining up to date information and advice and responding to public enquiries, the Council participates in a range of schemes and initiatives to make continued progress towards the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) target. Over the period 1995 - 2006, the Council reported an improvement in home energy efficiency of 25.2%. This puts the Council well on track to meet the HECA target of 30% by 2010. [21]

5.6.3 Fuel poverty is a significant problem in Oxford. If the City is in line with South East statistics, then it is estimated that there are 2500 households in fuel poverty and, there are 2771 private sector dwellings in the City requiring mandatory action under the HHSRS[22] hazard 'excessive cold'. To tackle this, the Council signposts people on benefit to the national grant scheme 'Warmfront' and has attracted £134,000 for energy efficiency works in 242 Oxford households in 2006/07. [21]

5.6.4 In 2006/07 the Council attracted £248,000 of external funds from GOSE for insulation in homes of the over 60s (680 Oxford households benefited), and had a fuel poverty budget of £50,000 for basic insulation measures in housing in areas of Oxford with most need). In both these cases, partnerships with British Gas saw them match our funding to enable twice as many households to benefit. [21]

[21] Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007
[22] Housing Health and Safety Rating System

5.7 Empty Homes

5.7.1 There are very few long-term empty homes in Oxford (138 were identified in the 2004 private sector housing survey) but the Council is working to ensure that these properties are returned to use as homes where possible. An Empty Homes Officer was appointed in 2006 as a part of the work identified under the Housing Strategy 2005 to 2008 and 10 empty homes have been returned to use since April 2006.

5.8 Regeneration

5.8.1 The Council is working to improve the quality of homes beyond the decent homes standard. In several cases this involves the whole scale redevelopments of places or types of dwelling.

5.8.2 Work has commenced on the redevelopment of the Orlit (pre-cast reinforced concrete) homes at Rose Hill following planning approval for the provision of 237 new homes (50% of which will be affordable). The Council has worked closely with the community of Rose Hill and Oxford Citizens Housing Association (who are managing the physical redevelopment works) to bring this project to fruition.

5.8.3 The Council has completed an options appraisal of its sheltered housing schemes to decide which remain suitable for future needs and to raise standards. Three sites have been identified for redevelopment, as the schemes there no longer meet modern standards. The land will be used to provide a mix of additional housing to meet current and projected need. Particularly for vulnerable people with Extra Care housing, homes for people with learning or physical disabilities and provision for homeless young people.

5.8.4 The Council is keen to review other less popular elements of its housing stock, in particular tower blocks. The Council will be undertaking a wholesale review of its tower blocks with a view to determining options for their future use and potential re-development.

5.9 Improve services, choice and quality of life.

5.10 Resident Involvement, consultation and satisfaction

5.10.1 The Council is committed to ongoing and meaningful consultation with the residents of the City. The Council launched its new Tenant's Compact in 2007 which has led to more tenants being involved in managing their homes in a range of different ways.

5.10.2 We want to ensure that people who are placed in temporary accommodation are included in consultation and involvement activities which enable them to participate in decisions affecting their temporary homes and their future permanent homes. This is one of our key service improvement priorities.

5.11 Customer Satisfaction and Service Improvement

5.11.1 We currently undertake a wide range of customer and service user satisfaction monitoring which helps us improve and develop our housing services. This activity includes satisfaction surveys for Council tenants and people living in temporary accommodation. We want to increase the level of satisfaction monitoring to include people who approach the Council for housing advice and whom we help in preventing becoming homeless.

5.11.2 We have a range of customer service standards in place for housing services. These describe what levels of service customers can expect to receive when using housing services provided by the Council. We want to review these with our customers to ensure they remain relevant and up to date and explore how best we can report our performance in meeting these, particularly in homelessness prevention.

5.11.3 The Council is continuously seeking to improve and develop its services and we will be working to deliver improvements that are clearly recognised by customers. Our aim is to deliver services that are excellent, as defined by the Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry[23], and acknowledged as such by our customers. This includes ensuring that services are tailored to reflect the diverse needs of people in the City and offer value for money.

5.12 Efficient use of Stock.

5.12.1 In order to help meet the high demand for housing that has been identified in the City it is vital that the most efficient use is made of existing affordable housing stock. This includes ensuring that vacated homes are relet to tenants as quickly as possible. The City Council has significantly reduced the time it takes to relet its homes and has a target now to ensure that the time taken to relet is no more than four weeks.

5.12.2 We work with the main housing associations in the City in a partnership called ORAH (Oxford Register of Affordable Housing) to ensure that lettings are efficient and fair. In 2008 a new way of letting affordable homes in the City was launched called Choice Based Lettings (CBL). CBL allows people waiting for Council or housing association homes to exercise choice over which homes they apply to rent and has ended to

[23] Audit Commission www.audit-commission.gov.uk

practice of the Council allocating homes to applicants against their personal preferences. The Council is working with other districts to provide a 'sub-regional' choice based lettings system across most of the county by 2010.

5.12.3 The Council operates a scheme to encourage tenants who are under-occupying their home (for instance following changes in family circumstances) to move to a more suitable sized home, releasing the larger home for a family in housing need. Under this scheme the Council offers such tenants financial incentives to make this voluntary move. 114 tenants have taken advantage of this scheme four years with 32 during 2007.08. However this have been mostly for people moving out of two-bedroom homes. We aim to review this scheme alongside housing associations to ensure that more under-occupied homes become available to people in housing need.

5.12.4 The Council is piloting a scheme which will see properties that have been designated for letting only to people above a certain age reviewed to help younger people in housing need access affordable rented accommodation. This need is particularly acute for single homeless people who require 'move-on' accommodation to free up hostel and supported accommodation they are occupying. The results of this pilot will be reviewed with a view to further rolling out the re-designation scheme where appropriate.

5.13 Supporting Communities

5.14 Community Safety

5.14.1 The Oxford Community Safety Strategy 2005 to 2008 (developed by the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership) has been instrumental in ensuring housing related community safety issues have been addressed and this work is continuing.

5.14.2 The City Council runs two key initiatives aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime. The Crime and Nuisance Action Team (CANAcT) is the dedicated anti-social behaviour team. This team deal a wide range of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and works in direct partnership with Oxford City Homes to tackle problems on estates. Recent work has focused on prevention activities and in particular ways of preventing families losing their homes through the behaviour of one or some of their members. See Table 17 for a summary of CANAcT activity.

5.14.3 CANAcT now use a family support worker whose role is to provide support to families where ASB is a problem to prevent escalation to possible eviction proceedings. So far in 2006/07 69 families have been supported in this way and the level of notices (NOSPs) served on tenants for ASB has reduced significantly. This links in directly to the Council's homelessness prevention agenda.

Table 17: CANAcT Casework

5.15 CANAcT performance	**2005/06**	**2006/07**	**2007/08***
Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (full)	10	13	9*
Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (interim)	7	2	6*
Acceptable Behaviour Contracts	76	75	48*
Notices served	23	15	10*
Evictions	6	8	5*
Family Support given	#	#	69*

* Ongoing statistics (Apr to Dec'07)

5.15.1 The Street Wardens service has been successfully expanded to cover the Barton and Wood Farm estates and funding for this service has now been mainstreamed into the General Fund securing the future of this valuable service.

5.16 Community Development

5.16.1 The Council has long had a strong community development role with services being provided through a variety of departments and partnerships. This will be reviewed and strengthened as the community safety and community development functions of the Neighbourhood Renewal department are merged with Community Housing in a new cross cutting department during 2008. This will bring together specific work on crime and safety and equalities. Working together as one unit, all these functions will be better placed to provide a more efficient and needs targeted service. This is a key area of development for the Council for the immediate future and is central to developing stronger and more sustainable communities.

5.17 Summary of Main Action Points To Improve the Housing Stock and Services and Support Communities:

Strategic Objective 4: Improve the quality of the existing housing stock across the City;

- Meet the decent homes target for Council owned homes.
- Improve energy efficiency in the private sector
- Deliver demonstrable improvements to the private rented sector through use of mandatory and additional HMO licensing
- Develop the landlord's forum and the landlords accreditation scheme (pilot)
- Monitor and improve the quality of temporary accommodation and Homechoice properties
- Progress renewal and redevelopment work following sheltered housing appraisals.
- Complete redevelopment of Rose Hill.
- Undertake options appraisal for City Council tower blocks.

Strategic Objective 5: Improve housing services, choice and quality of life on estates.

- Involve service users more in shaping the services that they use and that affect their lives.
- Improve the overall standard of all housing services in a way recognised by service users
- Make maximum efficient use of existing affordable rented housing stock (minimise relet times and encourage take up of under-occupations incentive schemes)
- Ensure CBL is not having any adverse impact on vulnerable groups in obtaining affordable housing
- Develop CBL to cover sub-region (County).
- Undertake equality impact assessments for all housing services.
- Develop proposals for enhanced Housing Options Service and multi-agency service hub as part of office redevelopment plans

- Complete integration and review of Community Housing and Community Safety / Development functions.

6 CHAPTER 6: Plan for the Future

6.1 Research and Intelligence

6.1.1 The Council has developed a wide range of information on the City's housing stock, the needs of residents and the dynamics of the housing market. This information is used to inform and develop strategies and services to ensure real needs are being met. The key studies undertaken to date include the:

- Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment 2007/08;
- Housing Requirements Study 2004;
- Private Sector Housing Condition Survey 2004;
- Sheltered Housing Appraisal 2006;
- Homelessness Strategy Review 2007/08, and;
- HRA Stock Condition Survey 2004/05.

6.1.2 The Council is committed to undertaking continuing research to keep its knowledge of housing needs across the City up to date. A countywide Housing Needs Assessment (to follow-up on the 2004 Housing Requirements Study) is planned for 2008/09. This will identify the housing needs of people from different communities across Oxford and the County enabling the improvement and tailoring of services. Additional study will also take place to establish the reasons for perceived high levels of homelessness among people from BME communities and whether there are any particular housing needs issues affecting these communities that are not being addressed by the Council and its partners.

6.1.3 The Council will also be continuing in its development of an affordable housing development strategy, which will identify medium, and long term plans for delivering the challenging affordable housing targets required to meet known demand. An Affordable Housing Select Committee has been convened in 2008 to look specifically at how these targets can be met, what the barriers to delivery are and how consensus can be achieved.

6.1.4 The Council will undertake an annual review of all of its housing themed strategies (Housing, Homelessness, BME, Older Persons, Private Sector, HRA and Development) to identify what has been achieved, areas where additional effort or resources may need to be targeted to ensure delivery and the addition of new activities where ongoing research and analysis identifies a need. The results of these reviews will be made public as updates to the main strategy document so the people of Oxford are kept informed of progress and new initiatives.

6.1.5 The Council will work with its strategic partners to ensure that existing partnerships are working effectively and are delivering clear outcomes

for residents and providing value for money. In particular the Council will review the City wide strategic housing partnership (SHOP) and work to develop countywide partnerships (OHP, LAA and Supporting People) ensuring they effective for the people of Oxford.

6.1.6 The Council will actively lobby for local, regional and national support for its plans to provide significant, additional affordable housing in and around the City to ensure that housing needs of the people living and working in the City are met.

6.2 Value for Money

6.3 The Council spends considerable sums of money on delivering housing services and improving the housing stock. See Appendix 7 for financial details of capital investment and revenue expenditure on housing services. Additional detailed budget information is supplied on the Council's web site.

6.4 The financial decisions that the Council makes for housing and housing support services are guided by Oxford's key policy aims: to deliver an average of 150 units of social housing per year, reach the Decent Homes Standard for the Council's stock by 2010 and prevent homelessness. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the future direction for HRA and General Fund capital investment and revenue expenditure in relation to housing services.

6.5 The Council's funds are held in two accounts. The General Fund is made up of income from Council Tax, business rates, government grant and Council services and is used to deliver all Council services except those directly connected with Council housing sock. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) uses income from rents and service charges to provide management and maintenance services to Council tenants. More detailed information on HRA income and spending is shown in the HRA Business Plan.

6.6 <u>General Fund</u>

6.7 General Fund (GF) revenue expenditure on housing is dominated by the costs of homelessness. Improved performance in this area has resulted in a reduction in spending and a focus on more efficient preventative working. The main area of expenditure where savings have been made is in the provision of temporary accommodation. Use of temporary accommodation has reduced by 45% since 2003/04 and use of bed and breakfast has all but been eliminated. Substantial savings have been made as a result (£3.5M).

6.8 The Council has been successful in securing additional funding for homelessness services in the City. This includes an increased grant allocation from CLG for homeless prevention and rough sleeper services (£640,000) and an additional £15,000 funding as a result of the Council's

award as Regional Homelessness Champions in 2008. The Council also receives significant Supporting People funding to deliver tenancy support to homeless households placed in temporary accommodation and to provide the warden call-out service.

6.9 Capital Programme Funding (GF and HRA)

6.9.1 In terms of the Council's Capital Investment Programme, the Council's major investment is meeting the Decent Homes Standard for its Council tenancies and sustaining the current level of expenditure on private sector housing. The Council wants to move away from funding non-HRA capital spending by selling assets as this is not sustainable. In future, asset sales will be banked into an investment fund to generate future revenue income. Borrowing will be used to fund investment where there is a sustainable business case. The medium-term aim of the Council's efficiency drive and asset management review is to generate an annual revenue contribution towards capital investment. This investment would be used to reduce the repairs backlog on the Council's retained assets and improve services.

6.9.2 Council has approved the HRA Stock, Decent Homes Strategy. This gives direction for immediate, medium and longer-term future of the stock. For the sheltered schemes this involves selling four properties and using the proceeds to fund decent homes and re-modeling works on the remaining blocks. For the tower blocks all five blocks will be brought up to decent homes standard by 31 December 2010 and a specialist consultant will be used to appraise future options. This will include producing a report setting out a realistic timescale and financial profile. The Council owns a number of 'Non-traditional' properties that have known defects. They are currently being assessed. The result of which will determine their longer-term future.

6.9.3 Funding the HRA capital programme, most of which relates to decent homes, is dependant upon a number of sources of finance. This includes revenue contributions, asset disposal (capital receipts) and major repairs allowance. If enough funding is not raised from capital receipts the HRA would need to look at prudential borrowing, the repayments of which could mean reducing service provision.

6.9.4 The recent trend for investment has been an increase to ensure improvements to the housing stock (primarily Council owned). Capital investment has increased up to a peak of £18.8 million in 2008/09 as the drive to meet the 2010 decent homes target increases. Significant improvement in the HRA financial position has been achieved over the last 3 years. The funding gap is now reduced to circa £6.5 million to achieve the decency deadline of 2010/11. The main area of improvement has been the approval of some £15.5 million of asset sales and improving on the budgeted revenue surplus year on year.

6.9.5 The level of additional disposals required is determinate on longer-term strategic decisions on the tower blocks and 'Non-traditional' properties. The concerns with timing of capital receipts and expenditure applies equally to the HRA and care will need to be taken that spend does not outpace funding.

6.9.6 The HRA is expected to fund capital expenditure of £0.8m in 2007-08 and onwards from the revenue account. The revenue budget shown in the revenue section of the MTFS shows an ongoing surplus of £0.8m. Any reduction in funding from revenue will mean further proceeds will be required from asset disposals.

6.9.7 The capital program includes estimated costs for decency and remodeling of the Sheltered Accommodation. The majority of the proposed expenditure relates to decent homes and is based on the initial data from Savills collected in 2003. This estimated costs by cloning similar housing types. The HRA are undertaking an on-going survey of all houses which is informing the spend figures included in the programme for 2007/08 to 20010/11.

6.9.8 The key assumption in the spend figures is that the capital programme excludes major structural works on the tower blocks. Should the long-term decision be to undertake this work there may be a delay in meeting the decent homes target. From a value for money perspective, it is prudent to deal with the longer-term strategy sooner rather than delay.

6.9.9 The decisions will determine the level of funding required. The Government of the South East (GOSE) office has indicated that an extension to the decent homes deadline for tower blocks is feasible, provided there is a clear longer-term strategy and an approved plan for financing the expenditure.

6.10 The Council is committed to continuing its work of improving the efficiency of its housing services to ensure that value for money is maximised. This work will include ensuring that housing services run efficiently, income is maximised, services are delivered in partnership and continuing savings are made to reduce overall expenditure.

6.11 The Council will also continue to develop its performance monitoring framework to provide clear evidence of service improvements (including a range of service user satisfaction measures) and improve its use of benchmarking tools to increase our understanding of the relative costs of services provided in relation to other similar Councils.

6.12 <u>Summary of Main Action Points To Plan for the Future:</u>

Strategic Objective 6: Improve our understanding of housing needs to develop and implement housing strategy.

- Undertake a comprehensive housing needs assessment across the county in partnership with housing authorities and other relevant organisations.
- Commission research on the housing circumstances and needs of BME communities.
- Analyse whether the reasons why BME households become homeless tend to be different from the reasons why households from the British White population become homeless
- Prepare and implement an affordable housing development strategy for the City
- Annual reviews of implementation of suite of housing strategies (Housing; homelessness; BME; Older Persons; Private Sector)

- Develop the range of strategic housing partnerships the City is working with to maximise affordable housing provision and service improvements.
- Lobby for the City's housing needs to be effectively represented in regional and sub-regional community and housing strategies.

Strategic Objective 7: **Ensure housing services offer value for money.**

- Manage the HRA finances and assets so that both the capital and revenue budgets are effectively funded year on year to enable the other strategic objectives to be delivered.
- Improve the collection of rents, service charges and arrears, maximising the collection of rent from Council homes (permanent and temporary) garages and shops.
- Improve the efficiency of homelessness prevention work through more effective use of Homechoice deposit guarantee resources through use of Bonds and recovery and recycling.
- Improve efficiency of services through use of improved IT systems (housing advice, Customer Relationship Management).
- Review management of temporary accommodation to ensure faster turnover and collection of arrears and recharges.
- Ongoing strategic reviews of grant funding programme for homelessness service providers in the City.
- Review and improve performance management arrangements to drive the value for money agenda.
- Ongoing benchmarking of housing services to identify and remedy areas of high cost and poor services.

7 CHAPTER 7: How this strategy will be implemented and monitored?

7.1 An action plan for this Housing strategy has been developed (see Chapter 8) to focus effort on delivering the strategic objectives identified for each service area. This action plan is directly linked to the action plans for the sub-housing strategies also used by the Council (e.g. homelessness, private sector, older persons, BME, HRA Business Plan) and to the Councils corporate and partnership plans and priorities. These explicit links are identified in the action plan.

7.2 All the actions in the plan are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Accountable, Resourced, Time-bound) and so have:

- Clear explanations;
- Milestones;
- Challenging but realistic targets;
- Officer responsibilities;
- Additional resources required;
- Timescales, and;
- Measures of success.

7.3 Progress in implementing this strategy is monitored by SHOP and Scrutiny Committee. SHOP's main functions are to:

- Develop and review local housing and homelessness strategies;
- Monitor progress of the housing and homelessness strategy action plans;
- Act as a resource for the Oxford Strategic Partnership;
- Contribute and respond to the regional and sub-regional housing agendas and lobby for recognition of Oxford's supply and affordability issues;
- Co-ordinate theme or task based sub-groups, taking forward any issues through the political or OSP structure as appropriate.

7.4 To ensure focused and coordinated work linked to decision-making, a range of operational groups are linked to SHOP via subgroups dealing with housing management, family and single homelessness, development and private sector housing. The groups deal with practical issues relating to implementation, reporting back to SHOP.

7.5 SHOP's role is complemented by Councillor involvement through Scrutiny Committee. Strategy and scrutiny officers have worked together with SHOP and the committee to agree selected performance measures and milestones. These are monitored on a quarterly basis with the opportunity for more detailed reports on any areas of concern.

7.6 This regular review process also enables any slippage in programmes to be considered and either accepted or for remedial action to be taken. Concern over any priority action that could affect the Council's performance or have a negative effect on the main housing objectives

(and hence on the Council's vision) could be referred by Scrutiny Committee to Executive Board with recommendations for change.

7.7 A full annual review and updating of the strategic action plans will take place from 2008, linked to consultation on any changes through an annual conference. This will be an opportunity to update the action plans to take account of any changes in what is expected of the Council or changes in the local housing environment. Progress and changes arising from the review process will be published in an annual strategic housing report.

8 CHAPTER 8: Action Plan

Strategic Objective 1: **Provide more affordable housing to meet current and future needs in and around the City.**

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Deliver an average of 250 affordable new homes each year ensuring that at least 30% are 3 bedroom or larger.	Annually to 2011	Development Manager & RSLs	Housing Corporation grant. S106 benefits Council's own resources.	Target on new affordable homes met. Meet LAA target contributions.	Sustainable Community Strategy
Obtain the maximum possible affordable homes through the planning system	Annually to 2016	Head of Planning	Funded within existing budgets	Increased numbers of homes delivered via the planning system (minimum of 40% p.a.)	Sustainable Community Strategy Local Plan
Continue to lobby for and progress proposals to develop on development land around the City.	Annually / ongoing	Director City Regeneration, Head of Service Community Housing and Development, Head of Planning	Existing staff resource	New developments progressed and appropriate funding secured,	Sustainable Community Strategy
Achieve local growth targets set in local and structure plans and	Annually to 2016 – 2026	Head of Planning	Existing staff resource	Local growth targets met	

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
regional housing strategy.					
Monitor housing affordability using local housing market indicators (develop annual affordability measure in 2008/09).	Annually	Service Development Manager, Community Housing	Existing staff resource	Ongoing understanding of affordability across tenures and market constituents. Actions developed to tackle key affordability issues.	Sustainable Community Strategy
Remodel Council owned temporary accommodation to permanent homes.	2009	Housing Needs Manager	TBC	Accommodation remodelled and let.	Sustainable Community Strategy
Increase availability of affordable supported accommodation for single homeless people (e.g. Littlemore Baptist Church and the Emmaus project)	Varies, but completions form 2009	Housing Needs Manager, Single Homelessness Manager	External funding	Schemes open and increase in suitable accommodation.	Sustainable Community Strategy

Strategic Objective 2: Prevent and reduce homelessness;

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Please refer to the Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2012 for the full action plan.					

Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 Objectives

- Increase the range of housing options and services available to prevent homelessness.
- Reduce the numbers of homeless people against key targets.
- Support families in housing need to prevent homelessness.
- Support rough sleepers into settled accommodation and develop clear pathways into permanent homes, training and employment.
- Support vulnerable young people in housing need to prevent homelessness.
- Improve housing options services.
- Identify and address the specific housing needs of different groups in the community who are at risk of homelessness.
- Ensure housing options services offer value for money.

Strategic Action 3: Address the housing needs of vulnerable people

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Implement new housing support services for older people following the Supporting People review.	2009	Head of Service Community Housing and Development, Supporting People partnership	Within Supporting People budgets.	New services implemented, service users satisfied.	Sustainable Community Strategy. Supporting People
Implement new floating support service for people with mental health problems in the City	2008	Head of Service Community Housing and Development, Supporting People partnership	Within Supporting People budgets	New services implemented, service users satisfied.	Sustainable Community Strategy Supporting People Homelessness
Undertake feasibility study for learning and support based accommodation scheme for homeless young people (Foyer)	2009	Head of Service Community Housing and Development	£15,000 (for study)	Feasibility study complete, clear plans for implementation developed.	Supporting People, Homelessness
Improve domestic violence services in the City to reduce harm and risk to women and prevent	2008 – new refuge services in place. Ongoing monitoring of this and sanctuary schemes	Service Development Manager, Housing Needs Manager	Within Supporting People budgets & existing staff resources	New refuge services in place, sanctuary scheme developed and in place. Reduction	Supporting People, Homelessness

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
homelessness.				in homelessness resulting form DV	
Extend the range of provision for elderly persons housing and support including Telecare and Extra Care.	Annually and ongoing	Head of Service Community Housing and Development; Elderly Services Manager	Supporting People budgets Existing staff resources	New and improved services in place, service users satisfied and proposals for Extra Care scheme in place	Sustainable Community Strategy;Supporting People; Older Persons
Develop clearer understanding of the needs of minority groups (BME, gypsies and travellers, gay and lesbian) and develop appropriate services	Ongoing and annually	Head of Service Community Housing and Development; Elderly Services Manager; Service Development Manager	Housing needs survey (shared cost in OHP). Up to £30,000.	Housing needs studies complete and proposals for service developments being implemented.	Sustainable Community Strategy ; BME Housing, Older Person Housing, Equality & Diversity.
Develop and improve support offered to residents in temporary accommodation including support beyond 1st stage.	2008 and annually	Temporary Accommodation Manager	Existing staff resource	Improved support provision and improved service user satisfaction	Homelessness; Supporting People
Review joint	2008 and annually	Housing Needs	Existing staff		Sustainable

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
working and partnerships for all vulnerable client groups to improve referral routes and services.		Manager, Options Manager, Single Homelessness Manager	resources		Community Strategy Homelessness, Supporting People

Strategic Objective 4: Improve the quality of the existing housing stock across the City;

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Meet the decent homes target for Council owned homes.	2010	Head of Oxford City Homes	£18.8M 2008/09 £14.7M 09/10 £14.2M 10/11 (identified in HRA budgets)	Decent homes target met (annual and final target)	HRA Business Plan
Improve energy efficiency in the private sector	2010	Head of Environmental Health	Existing staff resources	HECA target reached for 2010 (30% improvement in home energy efficiency) and private sector SAP rating increased.	Private Sector Housing Strategy.
Deliver demonstrable improvements to the private rented sector through use of mandatory and additional HMO licensing	2008 and annually	Head of Environmental Health	Funded through HMO licensing fees	Improvements in HMO stock, increase in HMO landlords licensed (to exceed 1000 by 2009/10)	Private Sector Housing Strategy.
Develop the	2010	Head of	Existing staff	Landlord's forum	Private Sector

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
landlord's forum and the landlord's accreditation scheme (pilot) to meet at least annually and electronically at least every 6 months.		Environmental Health	resources	and pilot accreditation scheme delivering demonstrable service improvements	Housing Strategy
Progress renewal and redevelopment work following sheltered housing appraisals.	2008 and annually	Head of Service Community Housing and Development; Elderly Services Manager;	Decent homes budgets and property / land values.	Redevelopments and renovations delivered as appropriate	Older Persons Housing
Complete phase 1 redevelopment of Rose Hill.	2009 - 2010	Development Manager	Rose Hill regeneration budget.	Redevelopment complete on target and budget	Sustainable Community Strategy
Undertake options appraisal for City Council tower blocks.	2008-2009	Head of Oxford City Homes	Existing staff resources	Appraisal complete and options identified by 2010.	HRA Business Plan

Strategic Objective 5: Improve housing services, choice and quality of life on estates.

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Involve service users more in shaping the services that they use. And that affect their lives.	Ongoing	Tenant Participation Manager, Service Development Manager.	Within existing budgets	More service users involved, increased service satisfaction, improved services.	Sustainable Community Strategy HRA Business Plan
Improve the overall standard of all housing services in a way recognised by service users	Ongoing	Service Heads	Within existing budgets. Scope for efficiencies	Minimum of 2 star standard achieved for all services (measured against AC KLOES).	HRA Business Plan, Older Persons, BME, Private Sector, Homelessness.
Make maximum efficient use of existing affordable rented housing stock (minimise relet times and encourage take up of under-occupations incentive schemes)	Annual	Head of Oxford City Homes; Housing Needs Manager	Incentives budget	Reduced relet times and increased take up of incentives particularly among 3 bedroom properties and larger.	Sustainable Community Strategy Homelessness; HRA Business Plan
Ensure CBL is not	2008	Housing Needs	Existing staff	Research and	Sustainable

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
having any adverse impact on vulnerable groups in obtaining affordable housing		Manager	resources	analysis undertaken. Remedial action taken.	Community Strategy Homelessness
Develop CBL to cover sub-region (County).	2009	Housing Needs Manager	CBL Budget / partnership	Sub-regional CBL launched across as many districts as able.	
Undertake equality impact assessments for all housing services.	2008 and annually	Heads of services	Within existing staff resources	EIA timetable in place, adhered to outcomes integrated in service planning.	Sustainable Community Strategy Equality & Diversity
Develop proposals for enhanced Housing Options Service and multi-agency service hub as part of office redevelopment plans	2008 onwards	Housing Needs Manager	St Aldate's office redevelopment / move. CLG Enhanced Options service funding bid.	Research and analysis undertaken. Proposals developed and costed.	Homelessness Strategy
Complete integration and review of Community	2009.	Head of Community Housing and Development	Within existing budgets / staff resources. Scope for efficiencies.	Merger of functions complete. FTE staffing	Sustainable Community Strategy

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Housing and Community Safety / Development functions.				reduced to 130.	

Strategic Objective 6: Improve our understanding of housing needs to develop and implement housing strategy.

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Undertake a comprehensive housing needs assessment across the county in partnership with housing authorities and other relevant organisations.	2008/09	Service Development Manager	£30K – shared cost across OHP	Needs Assessment Complete, action plans to address findings developed and being implemented	Sustainable Community Strategy Homelessness BME Housing
Commission research on the housing circumstances and needs of BME communities.	2008/09	Service Development Manager	£20K	Research complete action plans to address findings developed and being implemented	Sustainable Community Strategy BME Housing
Analyse whether the reasons why BME households become homeless tend to be different from the reasons why households from the British White	2008	Housing Needs Manager	Within existing resources	Analysis undertaken. Issues identified. Communities consulted Actions identified and implemented.	BME Housing Homelessness

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
population become homeless					
Prepare and implement an affordable housing development strategy for the City	2008	Development Manager	Within existing resources	Strategy complete and being implemented	Sustainable Community Strategy Local Plan
Annual reviews of implementation of suite of housing strategies (Housing; homelessness; BME; Older Persons; Private Sector)	2008 and annually	Service Development Manager	Within existing resources	Demonstrable achievements from all strategies and anew targets being developed.	Sustainable Community Strategy Homelessness BME Housing Older Persons Housing Private sector Housing
Develop the range of strategic housing partnerships the City is working with to maximise affordable housing provision and service improvements. SHOP / OSP / OHP / SP / LAA.	2008 and annually	Head of Community Housing and Development	Within existing resources.	Partnerships reviewed and appraised. Changes implemented. Demonstrable benefits to the City identified.	Sustainable Community Strategy Homelessness BME Housing Older Persons Housing Private sector Housing

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Lobby for the City's housing needs to be effectively represented in regional and sub-regional community and housing strategies.	2008 and annually	Head of Community Housing and Development	Within existing resources.	City's housing needs addressed – recognition of the long-term level of need in the City.	Sustainable Community Strategy

Strategic Objective 7: **Ensure housing services offer value for money.**

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
Manage the HRA finances and assets so that both the capital and revenue budgets are effectively funded year on year to enable the other strategic objectives to be delivered.	Annually	Head of Oxford City Homes	Within existing resources	Strategic objectives delivered within budgets. Medium and long term funding clear and secure.	HRA Business Plan
Improve the collection of rents, service charges and arrears, maximising the collection of rent from Council homes (permanent and temporary) garages and shops.	Annual collection and arrears reduction targets.	Heads of Housing Services	Within existing resources – generates efficiencies	Income collection targets met and improved annually across all teams.	HRA Business Plan Homelessness
Improve the efficiency of homelessness prevention work -	Annually	Housing Needs Manager	Within existing resources – generates efficiencies	More prevention through Homechoice with better use of	Homelessness

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
more effective use of Homechoice deposit guarantee resources through use of Bonds and recovery and recycling.				existing resources.	
Improve efficiency of services through use of improved IT systems (CBL, housing advice, CRM)	2008 and annually	Housing Needs Manager, Oxford City Homes	IT development / business transformation budgets.	More efficient and effective customer relationship management, more satisfied customers.	HRA Business Plan Homelessness Strategy
Review management of temporary accommodation to ensure faster turnover and collection of arrears and recharges.	2008 and annually	Housing Needs Manager	Within existing resources	Increased income collection, quicker turnover of TA to assist homeless people.	Homelessness
Ongoing strategic reviews of grant funding programme for homelessness service providers in	2008 and annually	Housing Needs Manager	Within existing resources	Continued effective targeting of grant resources at strategic priorities.	Homelessness

Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Additional Resources Required	Success Measures	Links to Other Strategies / Priorities
the City					
Review and improve performance management arrangements to drive value for money agenda	2008 and annually	Heads of Services	Within existing budgets.	Better use of CorVu to manage and report performance, increased service user satisfaction monitoring. Improved performance and satisfaction.	
Ongoing benchmarking of housing services to identify and remedy areas of high cost and poor services.	2008 and annually	Heads of Services	Within existing resources (e.g. Housemark and CIPFA fees)	Improved performance and cost effectiveness.	

Appendix 1: Consultation Report

Introduction

In the consultation process for the development of the housing and homelessness strategies, a number of methods were used to try and get as many opinions as possible on housing issues in Oxford. These included a questionnaire (both postal and on the Council website), and focus groups (with Council workers and managers, partner organisations and service users). We also used the Council's Talkback panel (a panel of Oxford citizens), and used Your Say Your Way (a Council tenants feedback forum).

On the 13th of February, we held a conference as part of the consultation and had around 45 attendees, including representatives from local partner organisations and voluntary agencies. The idea was to get as many views as we could on housing in Oxford. This was so that when developing and writing the strategies, we could be sure that the correct issues were addressed. The results of the consultation were taken into account when writing the strategies, and the objectives.

Executive Summary

Some clear patterns emerged from the consultation process, particularly from the questionnaires. The issues that people feel are important showed very clear patterns and priorities. These are (in no particular order) – high house prices, high rents, lack of affordable rented housing for families, Lack of affordable rented housing for singles/couples and Long waiting lists for affordable housing. Street homelessness / rough sleeping came up as an issue that people felt was important, through it had slightly less votes than the top 5 issues mentioned.

People were asked what they felt were the most important potential solutions to Oxford's housing problems, and two which were very popular were Build more homes (both family size, and smaller). After this, the next most popular were related to where houses should be built. From the talkback panel, the number of people who thought that new homes should be built 'in or immediately around the City' and 'away from the City in surrounding towns' were quite similar, with slightly more people voting for building away from the City. The postal questionnaire responses showed more people (37 people) thought it was very important to build in or immediately around the City (23 voted for building away from the City).

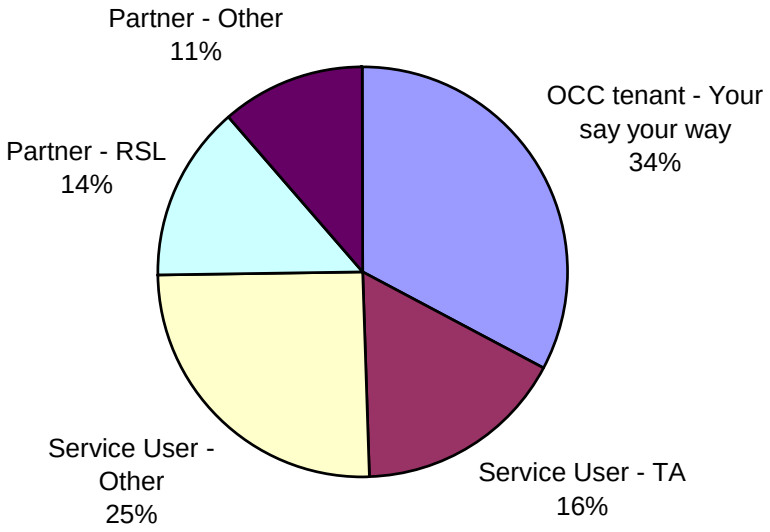
From the service user consultation, we found that the top 3 reasons for becoming homeless were drug or alcohol addiction, asked to leave by family, and health problems (this includes physical and mental health). Through our face-to-face focus group consultation, we found a few issues emerged frequently. These included the fact that service users feel there is not enough information available about the services in the City, and they are relying on word of mouth to find out about services which can help them. Also the problem of Prison leavers being released without support or accommodation was raised, as this can lead to more problems for individuals, as well as

history possibly repeating itself for many people. An issue raised in terms of young people was the issues with young people being given tenancies without support and guidance, and quite often losing their accommodation due to this and not fully understanding the responsibility that comes with a tenancy.

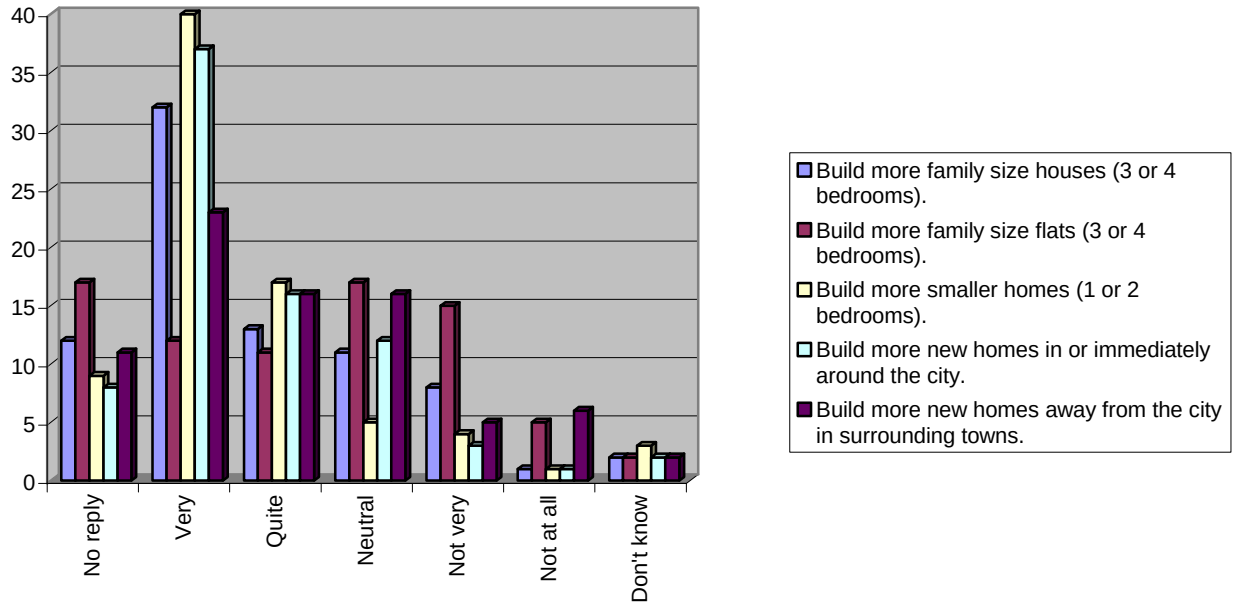
From the conference, which was attended mainly by representatives from partner organisations, we found that there were a few key issues that came up. These included things such as the need to raise homelessness awareness in schools, a need for partner organisations to work together towards the same goals and objectives, and making employment and training more accessible for both homeless people and people already in affordable housing.

Postal Questionnaires

This was distributed to a variety of people – partner organisations, service users, and Oxford City Council tenants (using the Your Say Your Way panel). 79 people filled in the postal questionnaire. Below is a pie chart to illustrate who these people were.

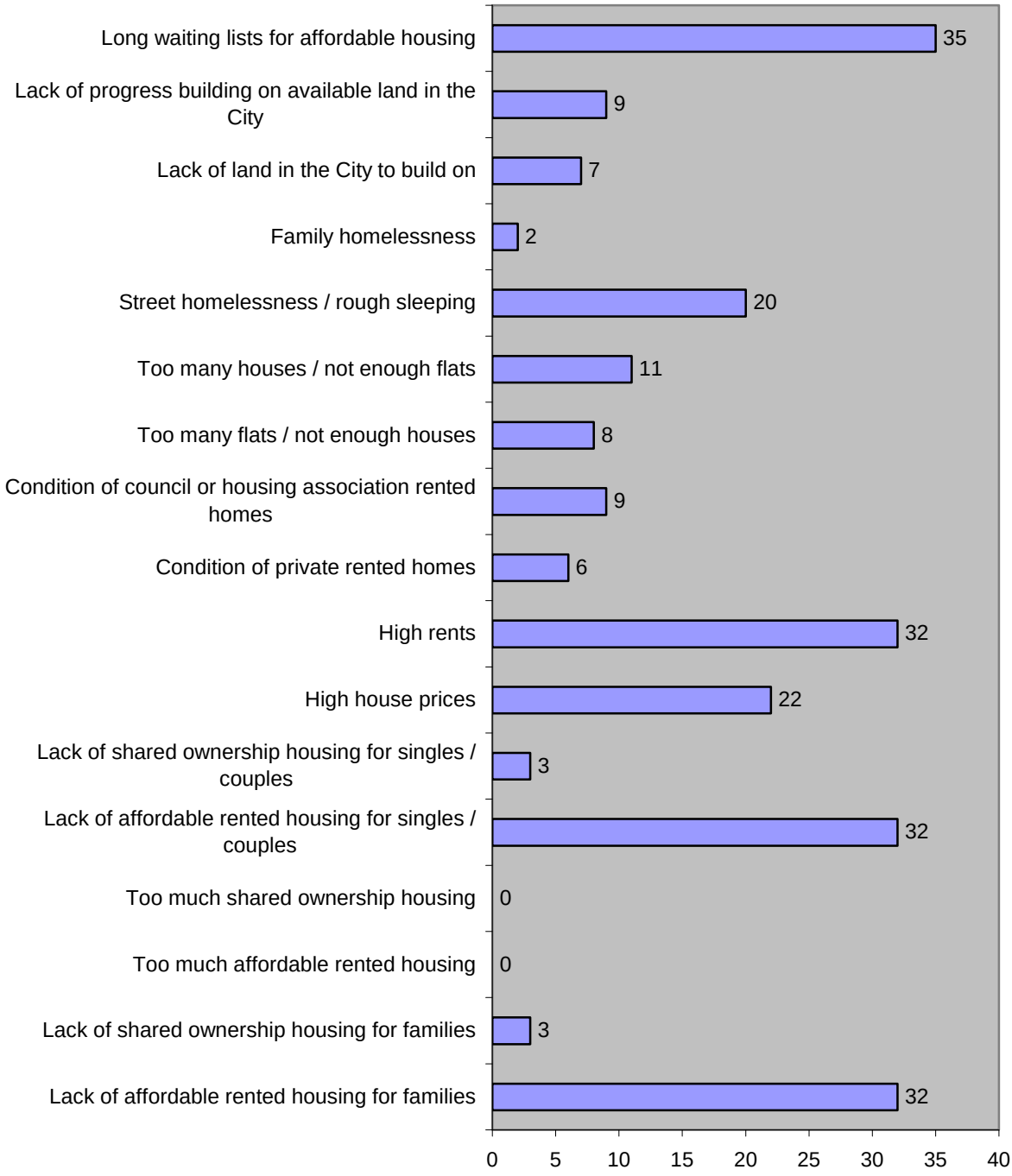


Potential solutions:



As can be seen on the above graph, there are 3 potential solutions that stand out, which people feel are “very” important in solving Oxford’s housing problems. These are: Build more smaller homes (1 or 2 bedrooms), Build more homes in or immediately around the City, Build more family size houses (3 or 4 bedrooms)

Three most important issues:



From the graph above, it is clear that there are 4 main issues that people feel are the most important. These are:

- Lack of affordable rented housing for families
- Lack of affordable rented housing for singles/couples
- Long waiting lists for affordable housing
- High rents

The question “how satisfied are you with the City Council’s overall performance on the following housing related services” got the following results:

	Very	Quite	Neutral	Not Very	Not at all	Don’t know / not used
Helping Homeless Families	**2.50%**	**11.40%**	7.60%	1.30%	1.30%	24.10%
Helping Homeless Single People	**3.80%**	8.90%	**10.10%**	5.10%	-	19.00%
Allocating Council and Housing Association Housing	6.30%	**12.70%**	11.40%	8.90%	2.50%	11.40%
Providing new affordable housing	6.30%	8.90%	**13.90%**	11.40%	5.10%	8.90%
Improving the condition of housing	11.40%	10.10%	**15.20%**	8.90%	2.50%	6.30%

The above Table shows a fairly high level of people with neutral feelings on the Council. It is also worth noting that the percentage of people who are very satisfied with issues to do with homelessness are very low.

Here is a small sample of some of the responses we got when we asked “If you are not satisfied (not very or not at all) with any of the housing services listed above please can you briefly explain why?”

- The real repairs needed are not done. Only easy cosmetic works are done
- Houses should be cheaper to buy and families with children should never be put in flats. More houses should be built.
- New affordable housing is allocated to those who are working, as many are sold off
- I don't think offenders take much priority with Allocations, which is surprising as some of these people will be eligible to be housed, and so it would be in the interest of everyone to assist offenders at the earliest opportunity as their re-offending will impact on many in the community, directly or indirectly
- Condition of housing - I am referring specifically to the private rented sector.

The final question on the postal questionnaire was “Is there anything else you wish to say about Housing in the City of Oxford?”. Here are a few of the responses;

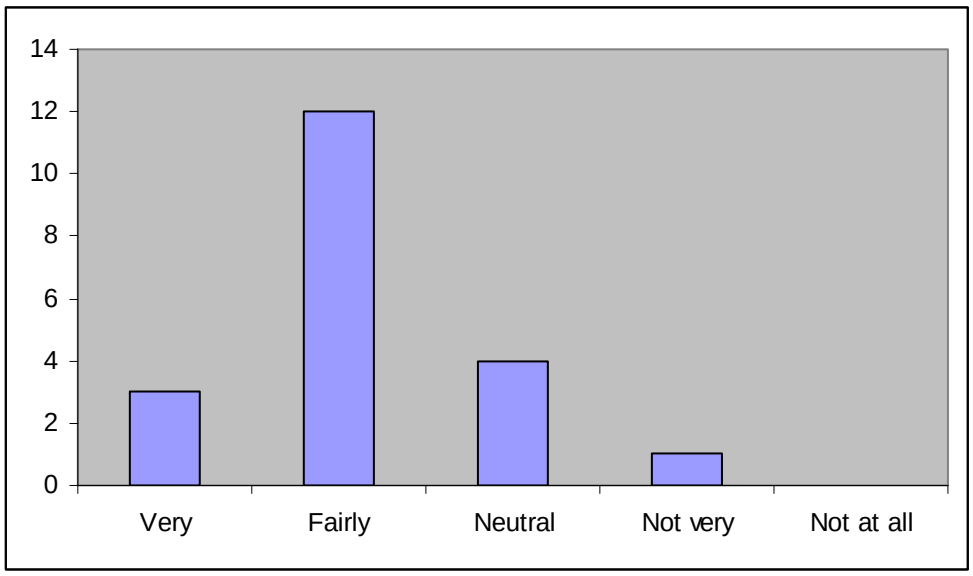
- Links between housing and support must not be forgotten. It isn't just a question of the need for more affordable accommodation!
- Unavailability to people on DSS
- It seems this City thinks that only people 25+ become homeless because there are too many services especially for 25+ and too many people under 25
- As someone who values the environment, also enjoys the benefits of the outdoors, I should like to see more support for Council tenants to improve their surroundings/communities.
- As with the majority of the country we have a serious shortage of affordable housing it is not helped by the majority of social housing

being allocated to the over 40's. Oxford City also seems to be less solution focussed and strategic than other districts.

- People who work and earn a reasonable wage, should have the same rights as someone on benefits to qualify for affordable housing and not be expected to go for the private rents which take most of the wages they earn in rent. Everyone should have the chance of affordable housing.

Postal Questionnaire – partnership working questions

How supportive do you feel the Council is in helping your organisation in its work with homeless people?



How successful do you think partnership working with the Council is in resolving the following issues in Oxford?

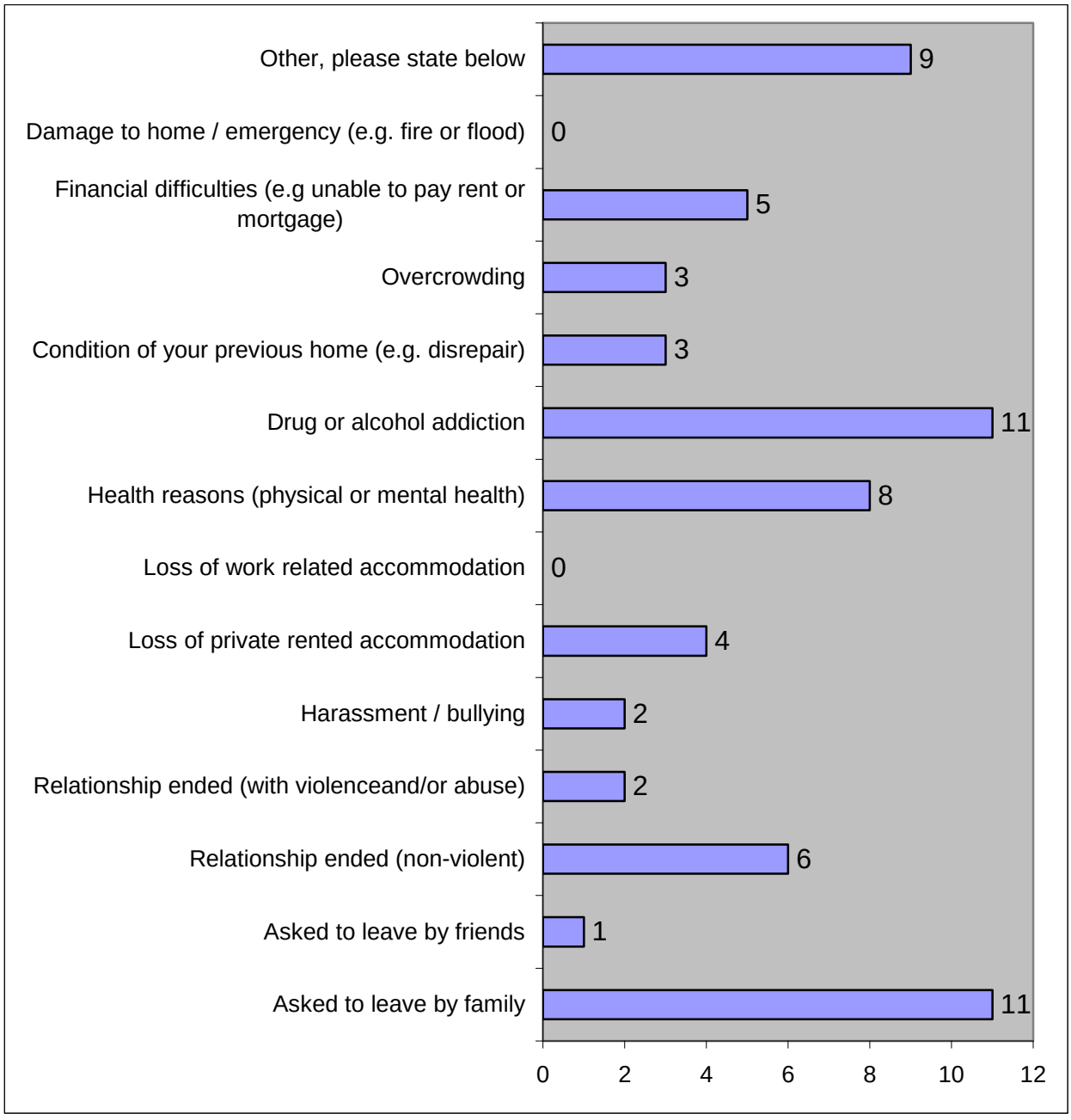
	Very	Fairly	Neutral	Not very	Not at all	Don't know	No reply
Helping homeless families	2	**6**	3	0	0	7	61
Helping homeless single people	1	**10**	1	5	1	1	60
Preventing homelessness	0	8	5	4	1	1	60
Allocating Council and housing association homes	1	7	**8**	0	0	3	60
Providing new affordable housing	1	4	6	**7**	1	1	59
Improving the condition of housing	0	3	**1**2	1	0	4	59

Considering your answer to the previous question: How do you think the Council could help (if at all) in providing a solution? Below is a selection of the answers to this question.

- Encourage all partner providers to have best practise policies around arrears and invest in early interventions regarding signs of tenancy breakdown.
- Broker relationships between third and statutory sector providers, e.g. health, education.
- Fully staffed team, dedicated staff member to work with specific client groups. More emphasis on the presenting problems of homelessness and less emphasis on keeping the figures deliberately low. Funding a medium to longer term supported housing project for young people with staff access 24 hours.

Postal Questionnaire – Service User questions

What would you say were the main reasons for you becoming homeless? Tick as many as appropriate.



In response to the question, What do you think could have prevented you becoming homeless in the first place?, the answers included not becoming pregnant, not having mental health or drug and alcohol problems and family relationship problems.

Services mentioned when asked which ones had been helpful included connexions, the bridge, street services, the Elmore team, support workers, drug services and mental health workers. Services they felt could have been useful to them, or may be useful to others included: more floating support,

more advice for young people living alone, shorter times in temporary accommodation, support groups (talking to people in similar situations), and lower rents for people who are ill, pregnant or disabled.

Online Questionnaire

There were a somewhat disappointing number of respondents to the online questionnaire; 14 people in total completed the survey. This means that they are unlikely to give representative results, and this will be a very brief summary of the results collected.

The results showed that the respondents felt that high rents (57.1% voted for this), lack of affordable rented housing for families (57.1%), and high house prices (42.9%) are the three most important issues in terms of housing in Oxford.

In terms of potential solutions for Oxford's housing problems, building more family sized houses and building more new homes in or immediately around the City were voted as very important by 57.1% of respondents.

Focus Groups (non service user)

The following focus groups were held:

- Oxford City Council Housing Needs staff (x3 meetings)
- OCC Housing Needs Managers
- Partners and RSLs
- OCC Elderly Services staff

From the focus groups there were a number of common themes. Participants were asked what they felt worked well, and not so well, in terms of housing in Oxford, and the Council's housing services. They were then asked to suggest possible objectives for the new strategies.

Common themes in terms of strengths were the options and prevention services in the Council, CBL, partnership working between different agencies, reconnection policy, reduced homelessness, efficiency, and the fact that SP has improved services, to name a few.

Areas for improvements included issues such as the need for a wet house in Oxford, improvements needed to Temporary Accommodation (i.e. not enough, and needs better management in terms of repossession and recharging), lack of communication; this is both within and outside the Council. In particular there is mention that there needs to be better communication with prisons and hospitals as discharge from these services has been identified as a cause of homelessness. Other issues included the need for help for young people and singles, the risk of vulnerable people missing out on housing through CBL, the risks associated with SP funding, etc.

There were many ideas for the future, and these included things such as; tackle rising numbers of young homeless by addressing the issue in schools, more hostel accommodation needed for 16-25 year olds, more move on accommodation needed, review advice provision, SMART objectives, emergency plans (i.e. flooding), impact of migration, earlier arrears notification to floating support, support needs analysis, support for families is needed, and more regular service user consultation.

Focus Groups (service users)

Service users from the Night shelter / Julian Housing / Luther Street medical centre

The main points raised by the 10 clients we talked to were as follows:

- Lack of information available about the services available to them. They felt that there were not enough leaflets/posters about the services in Oxford, and they relied on other clients to inform them.
- The issues with coming out of Prison and not having anywhere to go. It was discussed at length, and the problems that come with this included things such as a person feeling they are being punished for the crime they committed despite having served time in Prison for it, and there were issues raised about support. Clients felt that if they had received support and housing upon leaving Prison then they would not be taking part in certain things now, such as drug use, stealing, etc. The lack of support makes them feel somewhat defeated and let down, and it is easy to turn to these things as they are surrounded by them.
- Despite all but one of the clients at the focus group being over 25, they raised the issue of young people being given flats by the Council without support (some of them having gone through this themselves), and then losing the accommodation because they are not supported to sustain their tenancy, and do not necessarily understand the responsibility they have.

Young people – service users from the Bridge / Gap

We found from talking to young people that the problems they identified were as follows:

- Services are not known about – there needs to be more advertising so that young people know there are options if they are homeless.
- There are issues with intentionality decisions from the Council. Such as, if a young person chooses to remove themselves from dangerous or potentially harmful situation at home, is it fair that they are classed as intentionally homeless? Also, if a person with problems is given a flat by the Council at a young age, with no support when it is needed, is it fair that they are then intentionally homeless? Or were they essentially set up to fail?
- Not enough support services for young people (or if there are enough, then there is not enough advertising!)

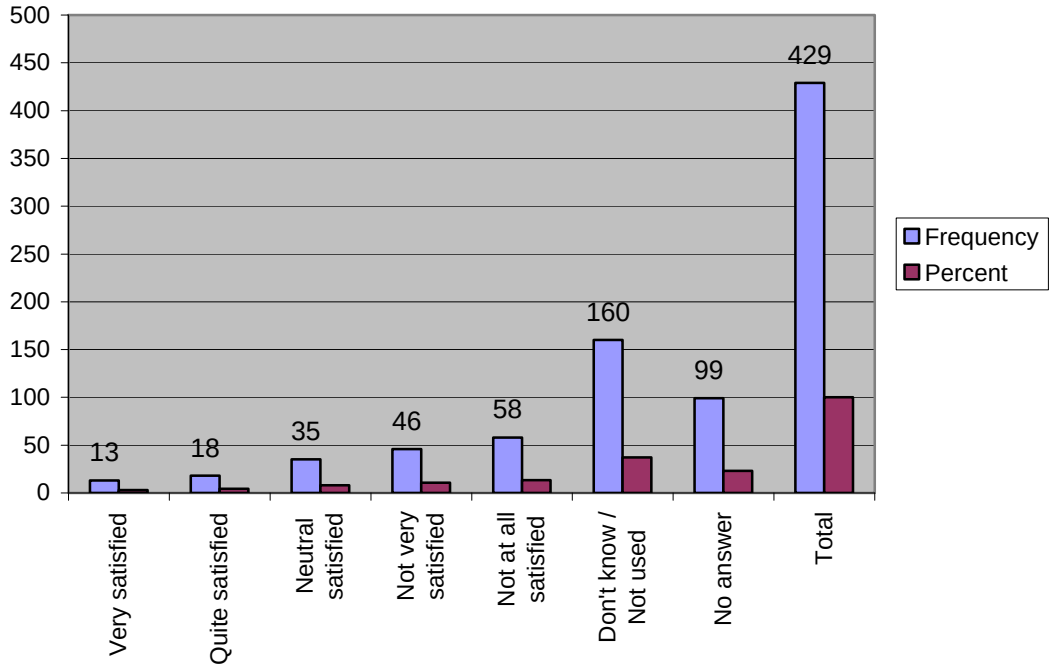
Talkback panel

The Talkback panel consists of approximately 1,000 residents (aged 16+), and Panel members are invited to take part in up to four postal or online questionnaires a year.

Please note : Some results from the talkback panel have been omitted, as there were limited responses (i.e. questions where more than 90% of the responses were “don’t know / not used”, or the person has not completed the question).

From the members of the talkback panel we received 429 responses (54 web, 375 postal) from 960 panel members (45% response rate).

How satisfied are you with our performance on providing new affordable housing?



The above graph shows an upward trend, clearly showing that people are not very satisfied with the provision of new affordable housing.

When asked the question “How satisfied are you with our performance on improving the condition of housing?” the results were as follows:

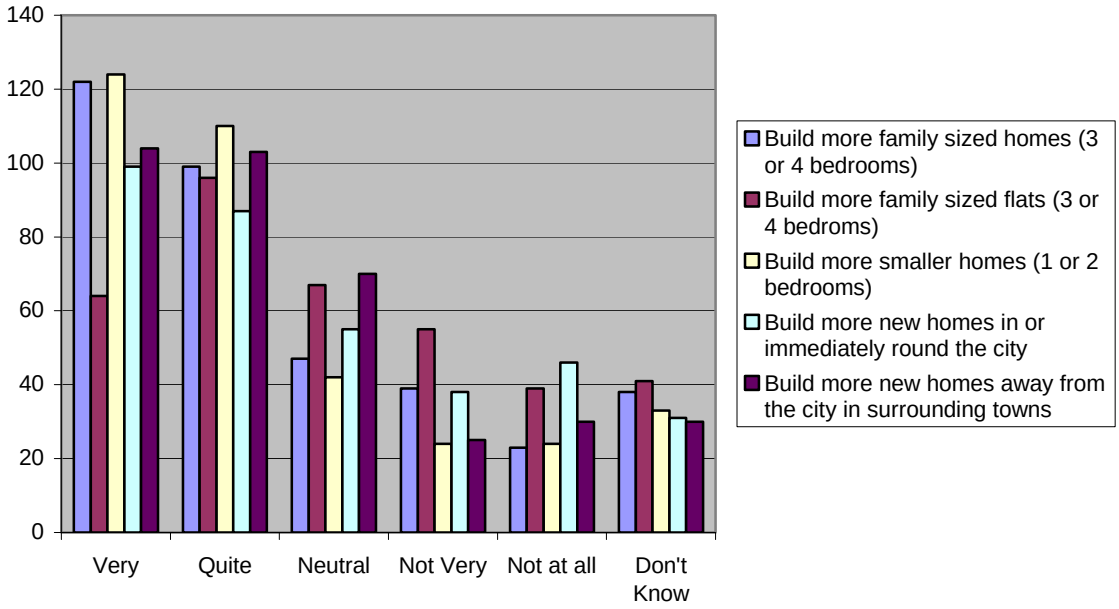
- Very satisfied 2.3%
- Quite satisfied 6.5%
- Neutral **10.3%**
- Not very satisfied 8.6%
- Not at all satisfied 6.3%
- Don’t know / not used 42%
- No answer 24%

What are the three most important housing issues in Oxford?

	Total	%
Lack of affordable rented housing for families	**151**	**13.0**
Lack of shared ownership housing for families	27	2.3
Too much affordable rented housing	10	0.9
Too much shared ownership housing	17	1.5
Lack of affordable rented housing for singles/couples	87	7.5
Lack of shared ownership housing for singles/couples	19	1.6
High house prices	**262**	**22.6**
High rents	**145**	**12.5**
Condition of private rented homes	60	5.2
Condition of Council or housing association rented home	22	1.9
Too many flats / not enough houses	66	5.7
Too many houses/ not enough flats	15	1.3
Street homelessness / rough sleeping	83	7.1
Family homelessness	25	2.2
Lack of land in the City to build on	54	4.7
Lack of progress building on available land in the City	30	2.6
Long waiting lists for affordable housing	88	7.6
Total	1161	100

High house prices, Lack of affordable rented housing for families and high rents are clearly the 3 most important issues according to the talkback respondents.

How important are the following potential solutions to solving Oxford's housing problems?



The questions on Council homeless services and allocation of housing were answered by a small number of respondents, but many felt dissatisfied. Equally many felt that the Council's performance on providing affordable housing and maintaining Council properties was below their expectations.

The most important issue for the respondents to the survey was the high house prices in the area, with high rents second and a lack of affordable family housing in third.

The panel also favoured building houses over flats and slightly preferred building in the surrounding towns in preference to the City.

Housing and Homelessness Strategy Conference February 2008

The day started with a short speech from Cllr Patrick Murray, the housing portfolio holder for Oxford City Council. He highlighted the need for more houses, and how the debate around the issue of housing needs to be lead by people in the field. He also talked about the need for a basic level of quality in all properties, regardless of tenure. Cllr Murray talked also about how homeless people need meaningful routes into employment and training, and there needs to be an increase in the opportunities available.

James Edwards (Oxford City Council's Community Housing Service Development Manager) talked next about the objectives from the current

housing and homelessness strategies, and the successes and challenges faced.

Bob Lawrence (CLG's Specialist Advisor on Homelessness) gave a speech, and talked about how there are four strands in the government's focus on Housing: youth homelessness, worklessness, private rented sector and supply of affordable housing. He also talked about how the government is currently reviewing its rough sleeping strategy, as it is 10 years old and the methodology involved needs improvements. He clarified that when Caroline Flint made her speech about worklessness, she was actually saying that there needs to be more opportunities for people in social housing who want to work, and it was not a case of saying everyone will be forced into employment.

James Edwards followed this by talking briefly about the consultation undertaken for the housing and homelessness strategies, as outlined in this paper. He then talked though the draft aims and objectives for the new housing and homelessness strategies.

The rest of the conference was spent doing group work – the attendees split into four groups and were asked to discuss housing in Oxford, with a few guidelines in terms of what to think about. Below are the outlines, with a few points raised by the groups.

What should the medium term (5 year) vision for housing and homelessness services in the city?

- More affordable homes
- Oxfordshire-wide Choice Based Lettings (CBL)
- Creating Choice – improved pathways into employment, training, etc.
- All agencies working together towards the same goals, all taking responsibility for the delivery of strategies
- Acknowledgment that homelessness is not just about housing – agencies working together to help with this.
- Incentives schemes to target under-occupation, thus making more larger properties available
- Early intervention and prevention (i.e. education – raising awareness in schools)
- Removing barriers to change (easier access to welfare, education, healthcare, etc.)
- Clearer information on the reality of housing options available to people
- A Foyer in the city
- More support (accommodation based, tenancy Sustainment, etc.)
- Countywide vulnerable persons protocol

What should the long term (10 year+) vision for housing and homelessness services in the city?

- Increasing employment and training opportunities and uptake (i.e. combating 'worklessness')
- Evolving service provision – changing / redefining services.
- National CBL
- National register of support services

- Need to free up local land

National Supporting People

Appendix 2: Strategic Overview

City Specific

- Oxford Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2012

The City Council works with a range of organisations in the Oxford Strategic Partnership to develop and deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy[24]. The vision of the OSCS 2008-12 is:

"Oxford as a City will build on its heritage and its international reputation as a place of learning and innovation to create high quality life outcomes for all those who live in the City. We shall develop a City that becomes carbon neutral with high eco standards that protect the health and wealth of all our citizens and which will be a model of good practice locally, nationally and internationally. We shall enhance the role of the City within Oxfordshire and the South East of England as a sub-regional capital assisting surrounding areas by the development of high quality sub regional and regional services and facilities."

The number one flagship issue of this strategy is "Affordable Housing" and the delivery of the Housing Strategy will be supported via an Affordable Housing Select Committee sponsored by the OSP.

- The Oxford Plan 2008 (City Council Corporate Plan):

Oxford City Council produces and annual corporate plan which outlines the Council's priorities for service delivery and improvement. These priorities for 2008/09 are:

- More housing for Oxford, better housing for all.
- Reduce inequality through social inclusion.
- Tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management.
- Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life.
- Reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Be an effective and responsive organisation, providing value for money services.

This housing strategy works directly to delivering the second priority 'more housing for Oxford, better housing for all'. Beyond this, housing impacts strongly in the other five priorities and this strategy reflects this. The Council recognises that housing is much more than just bricks and mortar and that the homes we all live in or aspire to, form an essential foundation to supporting and sustaining families, livelihoods and communities.

[24] Oxford's Community Strategy, the Oxford Strategic Partnership, 2004

- Oxford City Council Core Strategies

  - Asset Management Plan.
  - Workforce Plan
  - Performance Plans
  - Customer Services Strategy
  - Medium Term Financial Strategy
  - Cultural Strategy

- Oxford City Council Service Strategies.

This Housing Strategy sits alongside a range of other Council-wide strategies and plans which link together to ensure that housing services delivered by the Council and its partners are linked in with other services to ensure the delivery of the Council's vision and the objectives of the Community Strategy. Other key Council service strategies, plans and documents relevant to this Housing Strategy are:

- Oxford Local Plan 2001 - 2016.
  - This Plan sets out the policies and proposals for future development and land use in Oxford for the period 2001 to 2016. The Plan's objective is to promote positive measures to improve the local environment and to meet the needs of local communities.
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
  - This document advises how the Council will implement the affordable housing planning policies set out in the Oxford Local Plan 2001 – 2016.
- Community Safety Strategy.
  - This strategy sets out how the Council will work with partners to address anti-social behaviour and improve community safety.
- Equality and Diversity Strategy.
  - This strategy sets out how the Council will ensure that it treats residents and staff fairly, prevents discrimination and celebrates diversity.
- Social Inclusion Strategy.
  - This strategy describes how the Council will work to tackle social exclusion – where people and communities are prevented from improving their lives by circumstances beyond their control.

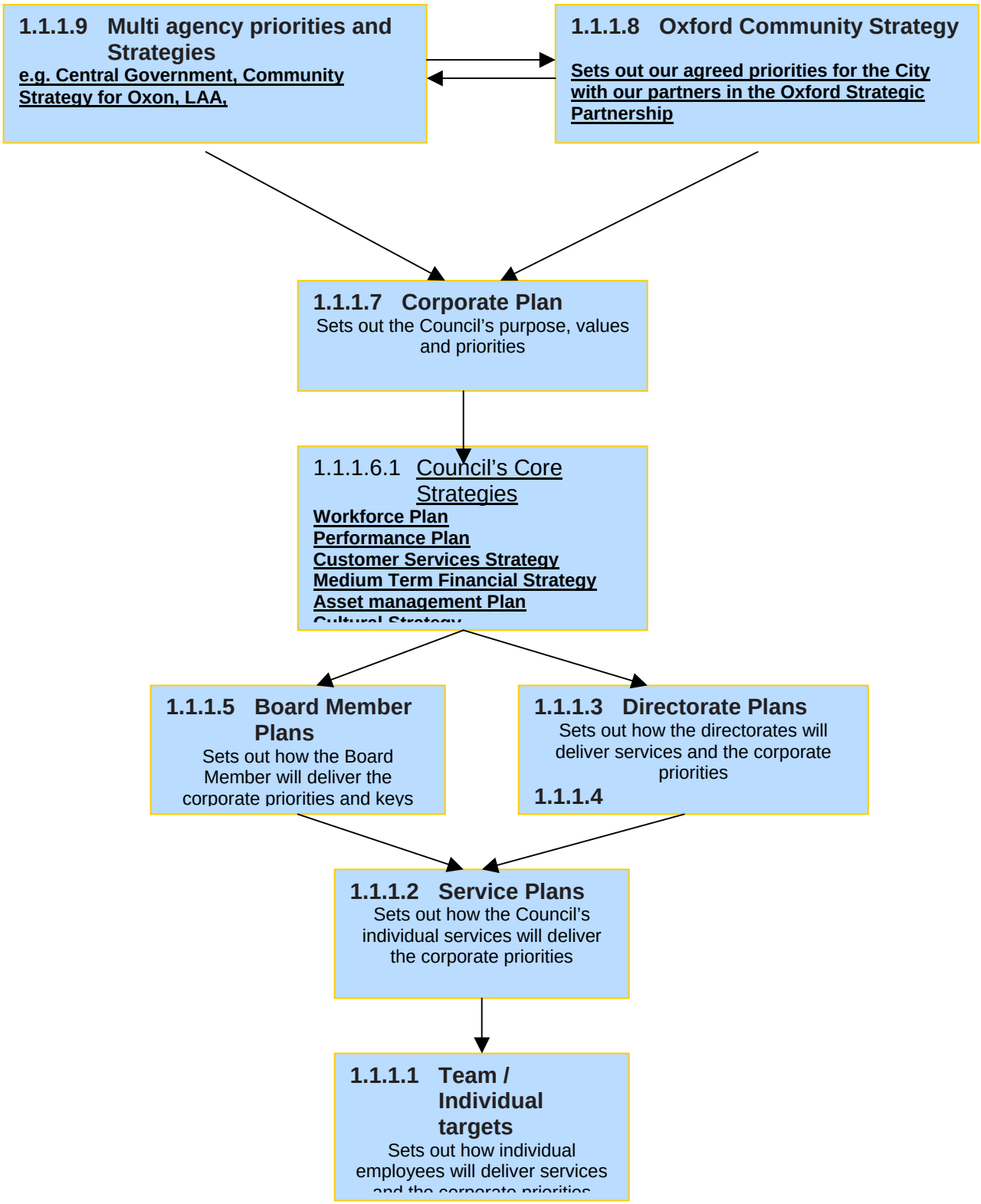
- Oxford City Council Housing Service Strategies.

A number of housing specific strategies sit directly under this Housing Strategy:

- Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 / New for 2008 –13
  - This describes how the Council will work to prevent and reduce homelessness in the City.
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

  - This plan details how the Council will manage its Council housing landlord services and assets.
- Older Persons Housing strategy 2007
  - This strategy describes how the Council will address the specific housing needs of older people.
- Private Sector Housing strategy 2007
  - This strategy describes how the Council will improve housing conditions in the private sector.
- BME Housing Strategy 2007.
  - This strategy describes how the Council will address the specific housing needs of BME communities in the City.

Oxford City Council Corporate Planning Process



County-Wide

Oxford City Council works closely with the four district Councils (Cherwell, South, Vale and West), Oxfordshire County Council, local housing associations and other organisations to provide joined up housing services to all residents of the County. This is achieved through a range of partnerships where all participants work together to deliver key objectives including those for housing.

- The Oxfordshire Partnership or Local Area Agreement (LAA).

This is the countywide version of the City's Community Strategy known as the Oxfordshire Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy. This is being redrafted for 2008. The key housing objectives of this are (under three central themes): (These are DRAFT)

Theme 1: A world Class Economy

- We will work to balance employment and housing growth and ensure a supply that includes housing for key workers.
- We will promote the need for quality housing.

Short Term Actions: To set and meet a target to provide affordable housing.
Long Term Actions: Housing supply meets targets agreed in the South East Plan.

Theme 2: Healthy and thriving communities

- We will tackle the issues of affordability and availability of housing - enabling people to live independently.

Short Term Actions: Develop a range of housing-related support services and appropriate accommodation to maintain independent living of vulnerable groups such as older people, young people at risk, persons with a physical or learning disability and those with mental health needs.

Long Term Actions: Tackle homelessness, particularly in the City.

Theme 3: Environment and Climate Change

- We will work together to ensure the environmental impact of housing is minimised.

Short Term Actions: Working with developers to ensure houses are built to high standards of sustainability.

Long Term Actions: An increase in the number / percentage of new eco-homes in Oxfordshire.

- Oxfordshire Housing Partnership

This is a partnership of all the Oxfordshire local authorities that works to set and deliver housing priorities for the LAA (above) and explores ways of joint working to meet wider housing priorities. This partnership commissioned the recent Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment (2007/08) which has helped us understand housing need and the problems of affordability in the City.

- Oxfordshire Supporting People Strategy.

This is the strategy for the countywide Supporting People partnership which manages funding of housing related support services. This is being reviewed for 2008.

The vision statement for the Supporting People programme in Oxfordshire is: "Working together to prevent and address housing crisis and to enable vulnerable people to live independent and healthy lives".

The strategic objectives of the Supporting People programme in Oxfordshire for the period 2008-2011 are in order of priority:

- Commission services that help partner agencies to deliver their priorities and use resources and funding available across the key strategies to deliver better outcomes for service users and all partners.
- Decide which services to commission based on clearly evidenced support need for all vulnerable people living in Oxfordshire's diverse communities.
- Enable service users and carers to have more say about what services we commission and how they are delivered from start to finish.
- Enable a larger number of vulnerable people to access appropriate support services that focus on enabling them to achieve their individual goals.
- Enable a larger number of service users and agencies who refer them to say that support services are easy to access.

Supporting People is very significant for the Council as it provides funding for a wide range of housing services for vulnerable people in the City. This includes City Council provided services such as community alarms for elderly people and temporary accommodation support. Funding is also provided to a wide range of partner organisations in the City who provide support for homeless people and those who for various reasons require support to obtain and maintain housing. The City Council is a key partner in the Supporting People Partnership.

South East Region

- South East Regional Housing Strategy (SERHS) 2006 Onwards.

The SERHS was developed by the South East Regional Development Board. The Board comprises directors from the partner organisations (GOSE, SEEDA, SEERA, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation) and a

group of specifically elected non-executive members consisting of elected Councilors from across the southeast region. This strategy falls under the wider South East Plan (a community strategy for the region).

The priorities of the South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006 are:

- We need to build more affordable homes
- We need to bring decent housing within reach of people on lower incomes
- We want to improve the quality of new housing and existing stock.

This Housing strategy actively works to contribute to delivering these regional priorities. The SERHA identifies a series of housing Sub-Markets in the region one of whish is the County of Oxfordshire which is seen as a discreet housing market with relatively little cross boundary housing market activity.

National Housing Policy

Recent developments in government housing policy have seen a focus on providing additional housing. The government has identified that an additional three million homes are required to meet demand and that a large proportion of these should be affordable. As part of its legislative programme for 2007/08 the government has published the Housing and Regeneration Bill 2008. This bill intends to facilitate the building of additional affordable homes, combines the affordable housing development funding function of the Housing Corporation with English Partnership's (who own large tracts of land) regeneration activities and establishes a new regulatory body to protect tenants of social housing (known as Offtenant). Oxford City Council welcomes these proposals and will work with strategic partners to enable the provision of more affordable housing in and around the City to meet the current desperate need and to address future rising demand.

Appendix 3: Strategic Housing Documents

This is a list of the main strategic documents which influence this Housing Strategy for Oxford.

South East Regional Housing Strategy: Published by the South East Regional Housing Board in 2005.
www.southeast-ra.gov.uk

Local Area Agreement: Published by the Oxfordshire Partnership in 2005. An updated version (LAA2) is currently being developed y the Oxfordshire Partnership.
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk

Supporting People Strategy: a five-year strategy published in 2004 by the Supporting People partnership (located within the County Council). An updated version is currently being developed by the Supporting People partnership.
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxford Community Strategy 2004: The Local strategic Partnership community strategy for the City of Oxford published in 2004. An updated version (Oxford Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008) is being developed.
www.oxfordpartnership.org.uk

Oxford Plan 2007: Oxford City Council's corporate plan. A new version is being developed for 2008.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2008: Oxford City Council's plans for managing its finances in the medium term.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Oxford Local Plan: The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 was adopted in 2005. It sets out the detailed framework for land use policies. All planning applications are considered against the policies of the Local Plan.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Core Strategy

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document: The Affordable Housing SPD provides advice on the delivery of affordable housing through residential and commercial developments and supports saved Local Plan Policies.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Balance of Dwellings SPD: The Balance of Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document supports the Local Plan. It seeks to ensure that an appropriate mix of dwellings sizes will be provided in new developments.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Housing Strategy 2005 – 2008: The City council's preceding Housing Strategy.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008: The City Council's first homelessness strategy. Currently being reviewed.
www.oxford.gov.uk

BME Housing Strategy 2006: The City Council's BME Housing Strategy.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Older Persons Housing Strategy 2006: The City Council's Older Persons Housing Strategy.
www.oxford.gov.uk

HRA Business Plan: The City Councils Housing Revenue Account plan.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Community Safety Strategy: Oxford Safer Communities Partnership community safety strategy. Published in 2004.
www.safeoxford.org.uk

Asset Management Plan: The City Council's plans for managing its assets to which are not residential housing.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Corporate Equalities Policy: The City Council's policy for ensuring equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. This is being reviewed.
www.oxford.gov.uk

Appendix 4: SHOP (Strategic Housing in Oxford Partnership)

SHOP Participation

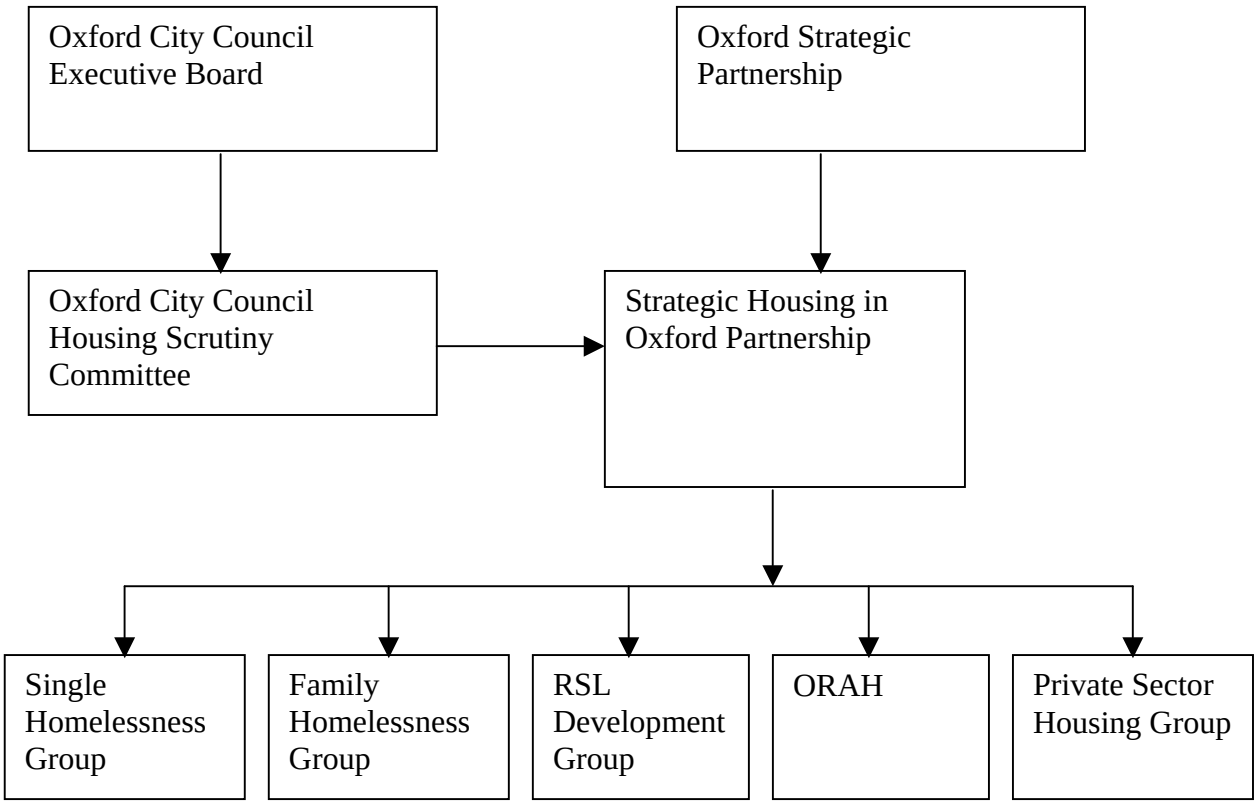
Oxford City Council:
- Director 'City Regeneration'
- Head of Service, Community Housing & Community Development
- Service Development Manager, Community Housing & Community Development
- Housing Needs Manager, Community Housing & Community Development
- Development Manager, Community Housing & Community Development
- Residential Health Manager, Environmental Health

Oxfordshire County Council:
- Housing Development Manager, Joint Housing Team
- Supporting People

PCT:
- Health Improvement Fractioned, Public Health

RSLs:
- Area Manager, Catalyst Housing Group

Voluntary / Other sector:
- Director, Night Shelter / Julian Housing


Oxford City Council Executive Board
Oxford Strategic Partnership
Oxford City Council Housing Scrutiny Committee
Strategic Housing in Oxford Partnership
Single Homelessness Group
Family Homelessness Group
RSL Development Group
ORAH
Private Sector Housing Group

Appendix 5: Housing Strategy 05/08 Action Plan Review Summary

Objective	Successes	Ongoing Challenges
Increase the supply of housing for people in need **PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**	The Council will exceed its target to deliver at least 150 new homes per year over the period of the strategy. 566 additional (net) affordable homes were built in the City 2004/05 to 2006/07 including 270 in 06/07. This compares to a net loss of 143 homes 2001/02 to 2003/04. All affordable housing units were built on Brownfield land in 2006/07. Adoption in 2005 of the Local Plan target for a minimum of 50% of dwellings to be affordable on residential sites with 10 or more dwellings, or on a residential site of 0.25ha. In 2005/06 49% of affordable homes were built as a result of this target in 2006/07 this was 40%. Empty homes officer appointed and 10 homes returned to use.	Affordable housing shortfall is still acute. The housing requirements study 2004 identified a need for a minimum of 1600 affordable units per year. We are very much short of this target. Family affordable provision remains challenging. Only 10% of affordable homes built in 2005/06 were 3 bedrooms or larger. Limited supply of development land within the City. The pressure on development sites remains. The local plan lists known sites and the Council is currently undertaking an asset management review to identify other sites which could be re-used for housing. Lack of progress with off-market land purchases for affordable housing developments. We have not been able to build on recent successes in trying to purchase sites from strategic partners for affordable housing although work on this continues.
Improve the affordability of housing in Oxford **NOT ACHIEVED**	Met key worker housing targets. Countywide Housing Market Assessment	The affordability gap in the City has increased over the period of the preceding housing strategy.

	undertaken (publication in 2008).	Need to produce Development Strategy for affordable housing – this has not been progressed. Put affordability indicators in place. No Housing Corporation grant awarded to private sector developers.
Increase opportunities for choice and mobility within the housing stock **ACHIEVED**	Oxford Register of Affordable Housing (ORAH) established in 2006, Choice Based Lettings introduced in January 2008. Sub-regional CBL to be launched in 2008. Introduction of the Home Choice scheme and Lord Mayor's Deposit Guarantee Scheme transferred to City Council administration. Furnished tenancy scheme successfully introduced by Oxford City Council.	No capital / financial incentive for people to move out of social housing into home ownership. Limited take up of under-occupation scheme.
Improve the condition of Housing in Oxford **PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**	Oxford has seen an improvement of 25% in home energy efficiency in the period between 1995/96 to 2005/06. This result means that now on target to meet the 2010 HECA home energy improvement target of 30 %. Mandatory HMO licensing scheme introduced. Stock Options Appraisal completed and signed off by GOSE. Continuing to work towards	Additional licensing scheme being developed (consultation late 2007 / early 2008). Develop accreditation scheme for private landlords. Home Improvement Agency

	2010 decent homes target for Council owned housing. Private Sector Housing Strategy introduced 2006/07. All newly developed properties in Oxford have to comply with lifetime and eco homes standards as part of planning requirements.	
Reduce homelessness in Oxford **ACHIEVED**	Have met the main targets in the Homelessness strategy 2003-2008 (Regional Homelessness Champions 2008): Homelessness claims and acceptances reduced. Numbers in temporary accommodation reduced. Minimal (emergency only) use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Success in tackling rough sleeping. Wider range of housing options explored with those at risk of homelessness. Joint Housing Team established.	Levels of homelessness remain high in relation to other similar places. Need to investigate reasons for high levels of BME homelessness. Despite the ongoing work of the street services team the number of rough sleepers remains high and first stage hostels are turning people away. Move- on accommodation for people in second stage hostels is still very limited.
Improve housing and support	Capital funding secured from central	Housing Advice provision under review.

services for all those who need to use them. **ACHIEVED**	government to improve hostel accommodation. Tenant involvement services comprehensively reviewed. Telecare services introduced in partnership with the County Council. Introduction of Joint Housing Team with the County Council. Wide ranging service reviews and re-tendering process via Supporting People for key housing services (hostels, move-on accommodation, floating Support and women's refuges). Funding for various groups continues with the notable introduction of the Credit Union. The Council gives core grant funding to agencies delivering Housing Related Support.	Work continues to deliver 2 or 3-star landlord service (inspection and mock inspection activity) Improvement plan in place. Implementation of sheltered housing review.
Improve the environment on estates and in areas of decline **PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**	Street warden service extended to Barton, Wood Farm and also more recently into Marston and Northway. Successes of CANAcT work in the City. Rose Hill regeneration has commenced after detailed consultation process. Extra money has been budgeted for	Ongoing regeneration work. Recruitment to Street warden roles.

	environmental improvements from the HRA budget (being administered through the tenant participation team)	
Develop housing strategy and policy to support service improvement **ACHIEVED**	New housing strategies developed for older persons, private sector and BME. Strategic housing functions merged in Community Housing department. Clear housing focus in City and County Community Strategies. SPD on Affordable Housing Adopted in Nov 2006. SPD on Balance of Dwellings being consulted upon during Aug/Sept 07. Due for adoption Dec 2007. Housing market assessment undertaken for the county.	Review of partnerships. Undertake countywide Housing Needs Assessment to follow-up / support HMA. Ongoing implementation of housing strategies and integration into countywide Local Area Agreement. Particularly bolster focus on preventing and reducing homelessness in the City.
Address the financial pressures on the Council for housing related services. **PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**	The Asset Management strategy has now been agreed and HRA reviewed. A funding bid was successful to maintain our rough sleeping services. A cross subsidy model of development is being piloted at Rose Hill, which has limited grant funding.	Housing services remain expensive when compared against our peers and there is not sufficient evidence that this is balanced by very high quality across the board.

	The costs of housing services have been reduced.	

Appendix 6 Performance Information

BVPI & Description	Target 2006/07	Result 2006/07	2006/07 Quartile Position	Target 2007/08	Result 2007/08
63 – Average SAP rating for local authority dwelling	69.00	70	Best	70.25	70
64 – Private dwellings returned to occupation	3.60	6.00	Worst	8.00	10
66a - % of housing rent collected	98.6%	97.02%	Worst	97.1%	97.15%
74a - % Council tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord	80%	80%	Second	N/A	N/A (reported every 3 years)
74b - % BME Council tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord	65%	79%	Second	N/A	N/A
75a - % tenants satisfied with opportunities for participation	60%	66%	Second	N/A	N/A
106 - % homes built on previously developed land	100%	100%	Best	100%	tbc

BVPI & Description	Target 2006/07	Result 2006/07	2006/07 Quartile Position	Target 2007/08	Result 2007/08
109a – Major planning application determined within 13 weeks	60%	74.47%	Second	75%	tbc
183a – Average length of stay in B&B accommodation	6 weeks	1.6 weeks	Second	N/A	N/A
183b – average length of stay in hostel accommodation	9 weeks	11.54 weeks	Third	11.00	13.82
184a – Non-decent homes at 1st April	23%	29.2%	Second	22.48%	22.48%
184b – Change in proportion on LA non-decent homes	21.23%	23.01%	Second	21.8%	23.44%
202 – Number of people sleeping rough	8	11	Worst	8	13
212 – Average time to relet Council houses (days)	28	33	Second	28	19.64
213 – Number of potential homelessness cases prevented	30	7.57	Best	8.5	7.15

BVPI & Description	Target 2006/07	Result 2006/07	2006/07 Quartile Position	Target 2007/08	Result 2007/08
per 1000 population					

Local Performance Indicators

LPI & Description	Target 2006/07	Result 2006/07	2006/07 Quartile Position	Target 2007/08	Result 2007/08
Client Share	N/A	63	N/A	N/A	44
Homelessness acceptances	N/A	233	N/A	200	196
Households in temporary accommodation		581	N/A	542	496
% TA rent collected		86.92%	N/A	90%	94%
Households housed through Homechoice	N/A	361	N/A	N/A	291
Number of affordable housing units developed		282	N/A	150	59

Appendix 7: Financial Information

Capital investment in Housing 2006/07 to 2011/12 (£ thousands)

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2010/11	2011/12
Council Stock	£10,918	£9,900	£17,013	£14,702	£14,204
Private Sector Grants			£480	£480	£480
New Housing Development			£875		
Other Housing		£1,400	£1,778		
TOTAL	**£10,918**	**£11,300**	**£20,146**	**£15,182**	**£14,684**

Future capital programme 2006/07 to 2010/11 (£ thousands)

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Council Stock	£10,918	£9,900	£17,013	£14,702	£14,204
Private Sector Grants			£480	£480	£480
New Housing Development			875		
Other Housing		£1,400	£1,778		
TOTAL	**£10,918**	**£11,300**	**£20,146**	**£15,182**	**£14,684**
Funded by:					
Supported Borrowing	£546	£546	£546	£546	
Govt. Grants	£607	£620	£320	£320	£320
Useable Capital Receipts (GF)	£378	£804			
Useable Capital Receipts (HRA)	£5,243	£3,340	£12,515	£8,476	£7,374
HRA Shortfall to be funded					£1,200
Major Repairs Allowance	£5,097	£5,190	£4,900	£4,850	£4,800
HRA Revenue (RCCO)	£32	£2,224	£830	£830	£830
TOTAL	**£12,203**	**£12,724**	**£19,111**	**£15,022**	**£14,524**

Oxford City Council Capital Programme – General Fund

	2008/09 Budget	2009/10 Budget	2010/11 Budget
MT Vehicles/Plant Replacement Prog.	1,852	1,340	1,447
Funded by Supported Borrowing	(1,852)	(1,340)	(1,447)
Developer contribution projects	3,100	14	
Funded by developer contribution	(3,100)	(14)	
Private Housing Grants Expenditure	800	800	800
Funded for Govt grant	(320)	(320)	(320)
Private Housing grants – Oxford City contribution	480	480	480
Area Committee Projects	200	200	250
Loft insulation – means tested scheme	100		
Community Centers	250	575	575
New Christmas lights	43		
Cowley Centre local Council office	40		
Provisions for Orlit redevelopment (note 1)	500		
Warren Crescent	375		
Jericho Community Centre (OCC contribution)			100
Leisure Centre improvement (note 2)	300	600	
Building improvements (note 3)	590	900	900
8.1.1.1 TOTAL	**2,878**	**2,755**	**2,305**
Funded by revenue contributions	200	400	400
To be funded by OCC	**2,678**	**2,355**	**1,905**
Balance of capital receipts b/fwd	2,200		
Funding gap each year	-478	-2,355	-1,905
Total GF capital expenditure	**8,150**	**4,429**	**4,072**

If future capital receipts are not used to support the capital programme then Prudential Borrowing must be used and funded within the General Fund Revenue Budget.
This will only be feasible once the revenue budget has been balanced by savings over the three years to 2010-11.

Notes:
1. Not expected to be needed
2. If required and best value
3. Subject to review of asset management

The funding gap in 2008/09 should not occur because elements above are provisions which will not all be needed. Building improvement works will not be commissioned if they create a funding gap.

Oxford City Homes
Capital Programme & Funding Summary

(£000's)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Capital spend requirement				
Decent homes	8,132	9,228	7,137	6,614
Other – disabled adaptations	500	500	500	500
Sheltered – decency and remodelling	1,268	4,057	3,556	3,236
Other – Miscall Avenue	1,400	1,778		
Inflation @ 3% pa		328	609	900
Funds required	**11,300**	**18,791**	**14,702**	**14,204**
Funds Available				
Supported Borrowing	546	546	546	
MRA	5,190	4,900	4,850	4,800
RCCO's	2,224	830	830	830
Capital Receipts:				
RTB	300	300	300	300
Other – actual / contracted	7,102	5,783	0	0
Other – approved	4,749	1,988	4,268	3,405
Total	**20,112**	**14,347**	**10,794**	**9,335**
Funding surplus / (shortfall) pa	8,812	(4,444)	(3,908)	(4,869)
Cumulative	12,021	7,577	3,669	(1,200)

General Fund Revenue Expenditure 2004-05 to 2006-07 (£s)

	2004/05		2005/06		2006/07	
	Budget	**Actual**	**Budget**	**Actual**	**Budget**	**Actual**
Homelessness		4,782,718		4,838,651		3,919,472
Homelessness externally funded	675,381	599,318	522,763	522,291	523,174	503,457
Waiting list	tbc	598,500	tbc	258,906	tbc	
Elderly and warden services	tbc	342,544	tbc	86,376	tbc	177,985
CANAcT	328,893	331,032	319,607	420,909	355,113	395,846
Street wardens	18,661	4,818	194,076	179,059	575,331	612,561
Rough sleepers*	34,498	12,055	12,511	34,967	39,428	49,500
Housing grants	468,170	468,170	468,170	468,168	468,170	558,512
Housing advice		33,957**		177,200		182,475
Total	**1,525,603**	**7,173,122**	**1,517,127**	**6,986,527**	**1,961,216**	**6,399,808**

*The Council has been successful in bidding for funding from ODPM homelessness unit to support specific projects regarding homeless prevention and support and resettlement of rough sleepers.
**Only 1 quarter paid as housing advice provider ended contract.

General Fund Revenue Expenditure for 2007-08 (latest budget), and the three year budget agreed by the Council (£s)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Homelessness	3,957,228	4,032,034	4,284,406	4,284,406
Homelessness – externally funded	600,000	534,528	534,528	534,528
Waiting list*	0	0	0	0
Elderly and warden services	157,484	90,209	198,720	198,720
CANAcT	402,846	424,042	401,113	401,113
Street wardens	575,231	529,193	572,310	572,310
Rough sleepers	76,379	80,620	73,966	73,966
Housing grants	382,130	379,208	382,126	382,126
Housing advice	152,913	72,528	141,57	141,57
Total	**6,304,211**	**6,142,362**	**6,447,169**	**6,447,169**

* To HRA

Appendix 8: Glossary

Affordable Housing: housing for people who are unable to resolve their housing needs in the local private market due to the relationship between housing costs and income.

Audit Commission: an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Their work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services. www.audit-commission.gov.uk

BME: a generic term used for people or communities who are not 'White British'.

Brownfield: a term used to describe land that has been previously developed.

CANAcT: Oxford City Council's Crime and Nuisance Action Team.

Capital: Capital expenditure is money spent on long-term assets, for example the purchase or improvement of property, vehicles and machinery.

CBL: Choice Based Lettings. A new way of allocating social housing based on applicant's preferences and choice of properties.

CLG: Communities and Local Government. The central government department responsible for housing and local government. www.clg.gov.uk

Decent Homes Standard: A minimum standard for homes set by Government. This standard must be met in 2010 for Council owned homes.

Eco-Town: A proposed new housing and community development that will have a zero carbon footprint.

Extracare: a type of accommodation service for elderly people who require medical and social support but do not need residential care.

FAROH: Families at Risk of Homelessness – a partnership group that works to identify and prevent families at risk of homelessness.

Foyer: A type of supported living accommodation for young people (under 26) that includes education and training.

GOSE: Government Office for the South East. www.gose.gov.uk

HECA: Home Energy Conservation Act. This act places responsibility on councils to produce reports outlining practical, cost-effective measures for achieving energy saving in homes in their area.

HMA: Housing Market Assessment. A study of evidence on house prices and predicted future demand to shape Councils housing plans.

HMO: Hose/s in Multiple Occupation. Homes shared by more than 4 people who are not related.

HRA: Housing Revenue Account. Ring fenced revenue account for Council landlord services.

KLOE: Key Line of Enquiry. An Audit Commission checklist to guide Councils on how to improve services.

LAA: Local Area Agreement

LSP: Local Strategic Partnership

Move On / MOPPS (Move on Plans Pilot): Permanent accommodation provided for people moving out of short-stay accommodation such as hostels.

ORAH: Oxford Register of Affordable Housing

RSL: Registered Social Landlord – a housing association registered with the Housing Corporation.

SAP: Standard Assessment Procedure. A means of rating a homes energy efficiency. The higher the rating the better.

Supporting People: A term used to describe the partnership of local authorities and service providers administering central government funding for people requiring housing related support. The county Council is the administering authority in Oxfordshire.

Telecare: A generic term for technological aids to assist vulnerable people to maintain their independence at home.

Appendix 9: Contacts

Thank you for taking time to read this strategy. We would welcome any comments you have to make. You can contact James Edwards, Service Development Manager **T:** 01865 **252449**, **E: jedwards@oxford.gov.uk** or post (Community Housing, St Aldate's Chambers, St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1DS) with any general comments or questions.

If you would like to know or say more about a particular aspect of our plans, please use this list to help you find the right person. The list gives details of all officers listed in the action plan. Officers are based in a variety of locations but post addressed to the Town Hall will reach them.

Community Housing and Community Development Service Head
Graham Stratford
T: 01865 **252447**
E: gstratford@oxford.gov.uk

Development Manager
Steve Northey
T: 01865 **252717**
E: snorthey@oxford.gov.uk

Environmental Protection Service Head
John Copley
T: 01865 **252386**
E: jcopley@oxford.gov.uk

Financial Services Service Head
Sarah Fogden
E: sfogden@oxford.gov.uk
or
Penny Gardner
T: 01865 **252708 (for both officers)**
E: pgardner@oxford.gov.uk

Housing Needs Manager
David Scholes
T: 01865 **252636**
E: dscholes@oxford.gov.uk

Housing Allocations Manager
Marianne Upton
T: 01865 **252633**
E: mupton@oxford.gov.uk

Oxford City Homes Service Head
Graham Bourton
T: 01865 **335434**
E: gbourton@oxford.gov.uk

Oxford Strategic Partnership:
City Partnership Officer
Sebastian Johnson

T: 01865 **252317**
E: **srjohnson@oxford.gov.uk**

City Development Service Head
Michael Crofton-Briggs
T: 01865 **252360**
E: **mcroftonbriggs@oxford.gov.uk**

Service Development Manager (Community Housing)
James Edwards
T: 01865 **252449**
E: **jedwards@oxford.gov.uk**

Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Manager
Andy Gray
T: 01865 **335705**
E: **agray@ocxford.gov.uk**