

Appendix 1: Priority Action Plan

Appendix 1 sets out the detailed delivery plan required to implement the 25 Actions identified above. For each Action we explain the rationale, set out the milestones and explain exactly what we will do to ensure delivery.

Objective 1 Increase the supply of housing to meet the needs

Action 1 Work with residential developers and landowners to increase the number of houses

Rationale

Private house building is close to an all time low (there were only about 180 new houses built in 2010/11 compared with over 550 in 2007/08). Sales data for December 2011 indicated that there were only 39 new dwellings available for sale in the Borough. This is compared with over 500 at the height of the market in 2007/08, and a current average annual requirement of about 350.

The emerging Making Places and Accommodating Growth Development Plan Document will allocate sufficient land to meet the forecast housing requirement set out in the Core Strategy. However, the Council is also keen to work with developers and landowners to kick-start stalled sites and reconsider conditions attached to planning permissions.

The Core Strategy also requires up to 30% of Affordable Housing, on appropriate housing sites, to be provided through Section 106 Agreements. The emerging Planning Obligations SPD will address the detailed implementation of this policy.

Milestones

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|-----|--|---------------|
| 1a) | The Planning Obligations SPD has been published for consultation | June 2012 |
| 1b) | The Planning Obligations SPD has been adopted | December 2012 |
| 1c) | The Preferred Options of the Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD has been published | October 2012 |
| 1d) | The Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD has been adopted | February 2014 |

The Council faces a difficult balance. Does it reduce its Planning obligations expectations to encourage new development or, does it maintain its standards and risk developers walking away?

Action 1

Work with residential developers and landowners to increase the number of houses

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
1.1	Invite developers to submit Viability Assessments with planning applications to reduce their planning obligations.	DBC Development Management Team		Ongoing
1.2	Consider approaching developers/landowners with extant planning permissions to review and possibly reduce their planning obligations.	DBC Development Management Team		Ongoing
1.3	Consider alternative ways of increasing the supply of Affordable Housing elsewhere in the Borough, in lieu of on-site provision.	DBC Planning Policy Team		Ongoing
1.4	Consider alternative delivery models, including Joint Ventures, Asset Backed Vehicles and Community Land Trusts	DBC		Ongoing

Objective 1 Increase the supply of housing to meet the needs

Action 2 Work in partnership with Registered Providers to increase the number of affordable houses

Rationale

Affordable housing needs far exceed the amount of new affordable housing that can be provided. Needs are greater than the total amount of all housing planned in the Borough.

The Local Development Framework sets floor targets of 35 additional affordable homes per annum, up to 2016, and at least 50 pa, thereafter.

Government funding for affordable housing has significantly reduced. The Affordable Housing Programme allocation is sufficient to support the construction of approximately 240 dwellings in Darlington between 2011 and 2013.

Milestones

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------|
| 2a) | 35 new affordable units per annum have been delivered. | 2012-2016 |
| 2b) | Opportunities to introduce an Empty Property scheme have been examined. | October 2012 |

Reusing empty properties as Affordable Housing increases the number of social houses at a fraction of the cost of new build.

Action 2

Work in partnership with Registered Providers to increase the number of affordable houses

	How will we do this?	Lead	Key Partner	Date
2.1	Consider Joint Ventures with other Registered Providers	DBC Programmes and Projects		Ongoing

Objective 1 Increase the supply of housing to meet the needs

Action 3 Increase the number of council houses

Rationale

The changing demands within the housing market are creating significant impacts on the demand for social housing and in particular the Council's retained stock. Demand for family housing is increasing while changes that are being introduced through the Welfare reforms are likely to see, either, increased demand for smaller accommodation or young people remaining at their parents' home longer with the potential for overcrowding.

In April 2012, the self financing of the Council's retained housing stock was implemented. It is intended that this will give stock retaining Councils additional freedom to manage and develop their stock. A 30 year business plan has been produced to support self financing. Although the early years of the plan presents a number of challenges, the Council retains the ambition to regenerate its own stock and develop new accommodation.

Milestones

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------|
| 3a) | Mix and tenure of existing stock, in the context of meeting changing demand, is evaluated | Ongoing |
| 3b) | The impact of Right to Buy changes and the need for replacement social housing has been evaluated | June 2013 |
| 3c) | An options appraisal for further development of council housing has been undertaken | December 2013 |
| 3d) | Specific proposals on future development of council housing have been prepared | March 2014 |

Over recent years, Government funding to build new council homes has more than halved. Darlington Council is looking at ways to meet the shortfall.

Action 3

Increase the number of council houses

How will we do this?	Lead	Key Partner	Date
3.1	Address the challenges of under and over occupation	Registered Providers, Compass	Ongoing
3.2	Identify need for additional council housing by location	DBC Housing	April 2013
3.3	Assess the impacts of the Welfare reforms and Right to Buy on the Housing Revenue Account	DBC Housing	June 2013
3.4	Consider alternative delivery models and funding mechanisms	DBC Housing	December 2013

Objective 1 Increase the supply of housing to meet the needs

Action 4 Increase the number of pitches for gypsies and travellers

Rationale

The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to include Gypsies and Travellers in their accommodation assessments. The 2009 Tees Valley Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) assesses need and identifies pitch requirements across the sub-region.

Darlington Council has undertaken work based on trends and local circumstances, which concludes that 35 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Darlington are required in the 15 years to 2026.

The emerging Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD will identify a range and choice of sites to meet identified needs.

Milestones

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------|
| 4a) | The Preferred Options of the Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD has been published | 2013 |
| 4b) | The Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD has been adopted | 2014 |
| 4c) | 20 new pitches supported by Homes and Communities Agency grant funding have been delivered. | March 2015 |

In January 2012, Darlington Council was successful in bidding for £1.5m from the Homes and Communities Agency's Traveller Pitch Funding programme to deliver a total of 20 pitches.

Action 4 Increase the number of pitches for gypsies and travellers

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
4.1	Consult on a range of possible sites.	DBC Planning Policy Team		April 2012
4.2	Include preferred sites within the Preferred Options Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD	DBC Planning Policy Team		2013
4.3	Allocate sufficient land to accommodate the required number of pitches in the adopted Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD	DBC Planning Policy Team		2014
4.4	Deliver 20 new traveller pitches	DBC Programmes and Projects	Homes and Communities Agency	March 2015

Objective 2 Improve the sustainability of housing

Action 5 Continue to effectively manage the Council's retained stock

Rationale

Housing delivers a wide range of services and accommodation that includes specialist housing for older people.

Some of the most important activities in the delivery of good quality affordable social housing are the provision of a cost effective and progressive housing service. Major activities include the effective collection of rents and the appropriate allocation of properties to ensure the best use of the stock.

The Housing Service works with some of the most vulnerable people, therefore, needs to proactively address the challenges of the Welfare Reforms while also understanding the role that housing plays in meeting outcomes for Adult Social Care and Health.

Milestones

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------|
| 5a) | The condition of estates are evaluated and actions planned in partnership with the tenants | Ongoing |
| 5b) | Rent collection systems, rent recovery and prevention of rent arrears mechanisms have been reviewed as a result of the Welfare Reforms | April 2013 |
| 5c) | The need for local allocations policies to make the best use of stock are considered | Ongoing |
| 5d) | The actions from the Supported Accommodation Strategy, where it concerns the council's stock, have been delivered | April 2014 |

The Housing Service aims to maintain the enhanced Decent Homes Standard in the form of the Darlington Standard during the Self-financing business plan period.

Action 5

Continue to effectively manage the Council's retained stock

How will we do this?	Lead	Key Partner	Date
5.1 Identify tenants who are likely to be affected by the Welfare Reforms	DBC Housing		June 2012
5.2 Develop an action plan for dealing with the welfare reforms including a communications plan	DBC Housing		June 2012
5.3 Consider the housing pressures in local areas and the need for local allocations policies to address these needs	DBC Housing		Ongoing
5.4 Consider the future role of sheltered housing in the light of the Supported Accommodation Strategy published in 2012	DBC Housing		April 2014

Objective 2 Improve the sustainability of housing

Action 6 Implement the Asset Management Strategy

Rationale

The Asset Management Strategy sets the plan for maintenance and improvement to the council's stock. In the period April 2012 to March 2017 a total expenditure £32.7 million is planned.

Last year 69% of all maintenance works were contained within planned programmes and 31% were reactive repairs. The recognised performance standard is a 70% planned and 30% reactive split. Reactive repairs are usually more inconvenient for tenants and more expensive because they may involve emergencies. Therefore, there is ongoing work to shift the balance towards planned programmes that reduce the risk of emergency failures.

A number of significant changes are emerging that will require revisions to the existing strategy, these include the development of an Energy Efficiency and Green Technology Plan and government proposals to reinvigorate Right to Buy.

Also there is a need to build on the successes of the current programmes and therefore a number of reviews will take place to improve delivery.

Milestones

6a)	The Asset Management Strategy has been reviewed and updated	October 2012
6b)	Heating Programme is delivered	April 2013
6c)	Programme to improve the efficiency of maintenance of the current stock is implemented	April 2013
6d)	Repairs and refit programmes reviewed to increase customer satisfaction	April 2013
6e)	A new Void Management standard to reduce relet time is introduced	April 2013
6f)	Support Independence	Ongoing
6g)	Consider "Just in Time" approach to service delivery	April 2013

The comprehensive planned maintenance programme delivers a range of housing improvement programmes including modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms, and environment works.

Action 6

Implement the Asset Management Strategy

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
6.1	Undertake a review of the current programme to ensure it reflects recent demands for repairs and maintenance and notices of obsolescence	DBC Housing		On going
6.2	Continue to rebalance repairs from reactive to planned	DBC Housing		On going
6.3	Continue to invest in Lifeline technology	DBC Housing & DBC Lifeline	DBC Supporting People	On going
6.4	Provide adaption's within set timescales in council housing	DBC Housing		On going
6.5	Fit Assistive technology within set timescales in council housing	DBC Housing		On going
6.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement revised void procedures and standards Approved by Building Services and Tenant Board Staff Training 	DBC Housing		May 2012
6.7	Introduce a programme of property surveys	DBC Housing		10% each year
6.8	Deliver 2012/13 Housing improvement programme	DBC Housing		March 2013

Objective 2 Improve the sustainability of housing

Action 7

Work in partnership to deliver energy efficiency measures as part of the Green Deal from 2013.

Rationale

In 2011, in Darlington, emissions from the domestic sector accounted for 36% of the total emissions for the Borough. Reducing emissions from the domestic sector is essential if carbon reduction targets set out in the Sustainable Energy Action Plan are to be achieved. A number of initiatives have been implemented to improve energy efficiency including insulation and heating programmes. There have also been a number of initiatives linked to green technology including the provision of photovoltaic cells. Some of these programmes have been opportunity led.

For council housing there is a need to move to a more systematic approach and a specific plan will be produced that will form a core element of the Asset Management Strategy. This work will link into the broader approach to energy efficiency

As part of the Warm Up North Programme, in partnership with several local authorities, Darlington Borough Council will retrofit: loft and cavity wall insulation; solid wall and floor insulation; draught-proofing; smart meters, energy efficient boilers and renewable energy installations. This will benefit both public and private sector housing.

Milestones

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------|
| 7a) | Memorandum of Understanding with 4 other Local Authority partners is signed. | April 2012 |
| 7b) | Procurement process with potential delivery partners has commenced. | July 2012 |
| 7c) | An Energy Efficiency and Green Technology Plan has been approved | March 2013 |
| 7d) | Delivery Partner appointed. | 2013 |
| 7e) | Phase 1 of Programme started | 2013 |
| 7f) | Phase 2 of Programme started. | 2016 |

We aim to deliver energy efficiency improvements to a minimum of 1,500 residential or other public buildings in Darlington. A Council investment of £5M.

Action 7

Work in partnership to deliver energy efficiency measures as part of the Green Deal from 2013.

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
7.1	Analyse information from energy performance certificates	DBC Housing		December 2012
7.2	Review existing programmes and their impact	DBC Housing		December 2012
7.3	Develop future options assessment	DBC Housing	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	January 2013
7.4	Cabinet approval sought to sign up to Memorandum of Understanding	DBC Programmes and Projects Section		April 2012
7.5	Marketing Day held to publicise the Warm Up North Programme	Newcastle City Council		May 2012
7.6	Contact Registered Providers who may wish to engage with the Warm Up North Programme	DBC Programmes and Projects Section		April 2012
7.7	Stock condition data analysed to inform targeting of Programme	DBC Programmes and Projects Section		Ongoing
7.8	Contact other public sector bodies who may wish to engage with the Programme			April 2012

Objective 2 Improve the sustainability of housing

Action 8 Publicise the free availability of water conservation measures

Rationale

Water is a precious resource which is costly to treat and supply. The average person in the North East uses about 140 litres (246 pints) of water per day. The average household of 2 adults and 2 children uses about 560 litres (985 pints) of water per day.

Water that is wasted is treated twice: once before reaching the household tap and once again when it is returned to the environment. This treatment requires a lot of energy. Water conservation, therefore, reduces consumption of a precious resource, reduces the carbon footprint of supplying water and has a beneficial impact on household water bills.

Northumbrian Water already publicises the free availability of water conservation measures via the internet and via leaflets sent to households. However, the Council has an opportunity to remind council house tenants, via the quarterly newsletter "Hot News", about the free availability of water conservation measures.

Milestones

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|-----|---|-------------|
| 8a) | Information and signposting provided via housing publications, Town Crier and Council website | Summer 2012 |
| 8b) | Water conservation promoted at the Green Fair | May 2012 |
| 8c) | Water conservation promoted at Low Carbon event | June 2012 |

Where it is practicable and cost effective installing a meter can reduce water usage and could save you money. Paying for what you use also means that less water is wasted which helps conserve valuable water resources.

Action 8

Publicise the free availability of water conservation measures

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
8.1	Investigate what is on offer to residents.	DBC Programmes & Projects Team	Northumbrian Water	Ongoing
8.2	Implement a programme of promotion of water saving devices/measures	DBC Programmes & Projects Team & Housing	Northumbrian Water and Northern Echo	Ongoing

Objective 2 Action 9

Improve the sustainability of housing

Ensure new housing meets sustainable building standards as set out in the Local Plan to be resilient to climate change

Rationale

New housing which meets energy efficiency guidance is essential if targets set out in the Sustainable Energy Action Plan are to be met. In June 2010, the Council adopted a Carbon Management Plan which sets out our ambition for reducing our own carbon emissions by 25% over four years and outlines the actions needed to achieve time targets.

Through high quality design and efficient operation of development, energy consumption could be cut which should reduce emissions of CO₂; a major cause of climate change.

Designs should reflect the Council's Design SPD and plan for the lifetime of a development, recognising not only its impact on the current climate but the benefits sustainability can have for the climate in the long term. Location, layout and design of sustainable development should reflect local building types, but will perform in a superior way. All new development should be capable of incorporating measures to reduce carbon emissions in the medium-long term and mitigate forecast impacts of climate change such as; flood risk, extremes of temperature and more frequent storms.

Milestones

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------|
| 9a) | 90% of applications should achieve CSH Level 3 | Ongoing |
| 9b) | 10% of applications should achieve CSH Level 4 | Ongoing |
| 9c) | A reduction in NI186 figures for Domestic achieved | October 2012 |

We need to reduce CO₂ emissions by at least 20% by 2020.

Action 9

Ensure new housing meets sustainable building standards as set out in the Local Plan to be resilient to climate change

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
9.1	Investigate the potential of Enplanner as a tool to ensure delivery of targets set in the Local Plan.	DBC Development Management & Programmes & Projects Teams	Encraft	June 2012
9.2	Host a developers seminar to demonstrate Enplanner as a tool for completing Design and Access Statement requirements as part of planning applications.	DBC Programmes & Projects Team	Encraft / Developers	June 2012
9.3	Implement Carbon Management Plan	DBC Planning Policy Team	Developers	Ongoing
9.4	Making Places Accommodating Growth to include 20% renewable energy targets for strategic sites.	DBC Planning Policy Team		Consultation –2013 Adoption - 2014

Objective 2

Improve the sustainability of housing

Action 10

Prepare and adopt a Tenancy Strategy and a Tenancy Policy for the Council's own stock

Rationale

The Localism Act 2011 requires all Local Authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy for their area, to provide the framework for the granting and reissuing of tenancies that includes all Registered Providers including housing stock retention authorities like ourselves. The Tenancy Strategy introduces a new responsibility for Local Authorities as it is intended to give Local Authorities more control of the way social housing is used to meet local needs. The Government want Local Authorities to have the opportunity, if they think it is necessary, to introduce a more flexible approach to the types of tenancies being granted.

The 5 Local Authorities in the Tees Valley are developing a joint Tees Valley Tenancy Strategy.

All Registered Providers also have to produce a Tenancy Policy for their own organisation which has regard to the overarching Tenancy Strategy. Darlington Council, therefore, has to produce a Tenancy Policy for its council housing.

Milestones

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|------|---|----------------|
| 10a) | Tees Valley Tenancy Strategy produced with any amendments specific to Darlington for approval | September 2012 |
| 10b) | Tenancy Policy produced for approval | September 2012 |
| 10c) | Review Tenancy Policy at 1 st anniversary of approval | On going |

The Tenancy Strategy has to set out the circumstances in which a tenancy of a particular kind will be granted; where a tenancy is set for a term, the length of that term and, the circumstances where a further tenancy will be granted.

Action10

Prepare and adopt a Tenancy Strategy and a Tenancy Policy for the Council's own stock

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
10.1	Consultation with all Registered Providers via Tees Valley	Tees Valley Group		May 2012
10.2	Consultation with all Stakeholders in Darlington	DBC Housing	Tees Valley Group	June 2012
10.3	Produce final draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy for approval	DBC Housing	Darlington Tenants Board	September 2012

Objective 2 Improve the sustainability of housing

Action 11 Conduct a review of the Allocations Policy

Rationale

The Localism Act 2011 introduces potentially significant amendments to the way that Social Housing properties are allocated. The Government wants to ensure that Allocations policies balance between meeting acute housing need and contributing to broader social and economic well-being in the context of the limited supply of social housing. They therefore want to introduce more local flexibility within Allocations policy. This consultation follows an earlier consultation: Local decisions: *A fairer future for social housing* also based on proposals in the Localism Act that included these additional related proposals:

- Introducing new flexibilities for social landlords to offer tenancies for a fixed term, usually of at least five years
- Introduction of Affordable Rents
- Reform of Homelessness to make effective use of the private rented sector and in particular to discharge the housing duty by offering accommodation in the private sector

Darlington are partners with the 4 other Tees Valley Local Authorities in providing the Compass allocations system. The group that manage Compass are reviewing the shared allocations policy.

Milestones

11a) Review of allocations policy produced for approval Sept 2012

All Registered Providers in Darlington offer Introductory and Secure Tenancies and this will remain our preferred choice for the majority of allocations. For some specialist housing schemes, there may be occasions when a fixed term tenancy is more appropriate.

Action 11 Conduct a review of the Allocations Policy

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
11.1	Compass management group conduct review	Compass		2012
11.2	Darlington consider any local lettings policy additions /changes	DBC Housing		2012

Objective 2 Action 12

Improve the sustainability of housing

Introduce enhanced role of tenant engagement

Rationale

The regulatory framework for social housing changed from the 1 April 2012 as a result of a Government review and the changes introduced within the Localism Act. The Government is creating new mechanisms for the way tenants' problems with housing services are addressed.

There will be more focus on local mechanisms for resolving complaints. A key aspect of the changes will see greater scrutiny of housing services by tenants

Milestones

12a)	Enhanced appeals mechanism developed	April 2012
12b)	Enhanced scrutiny mechanisms developed	On going
12c)	Progress reviewed	Annual

Darlington Tenants Board already fills an important role in the decision-making structure of the Housing Service, acting as a Forum where tenants and leaseholders can comment on and alter Council policies, set targets and monitor performance.

Action 12 Introduce enhanced role of tenant engagement

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
12.1	Evolve role of Tenants Board to include enhanced scrutiny	DBC Housing	Tenants Board	On going
12.2	Develop enhanced Appeals mechanism to meet national requirements	DBC Housing	Tenants Board	April 2013
12.3	Develop Tenant Inspection Team	DBC Housing	Tenants Board	April 2013
12.4	Further develop "Mystery Shopping" to monitor performance	DBC Housing	Tenants Board	Cyclical programme

Objective 3 Improve conditions in the private housing sector

Action 13 Increase the number of Accredited Landlords

Rationale

Darlington has a successful and established Landlord Accreditation scheme with nearly 60 landlord members and 400 accredited properties.

This provides an invaluable opportunity to provide good quality private rented properties to residents in the Borough.

The standards of the scheme are high and this ensures that tenants can use and access the scheme with confidence.

Expanding the scheme is a priority to provide greater numbers of good quality properties and good landlords.

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|--|------------|
| 13a) | The criteria for accreditation has been reviewed. | June 2012 |
| 13b) | The number of Accredited Landlords has increased to 70 | April 2013 |
| 13c) | The number of Accredited properties increased to 450 | April 2013 |

There are approx. 5,310 privately rented dwellings in Darlington representing 11% of all housing stock. This number is forecast to increase considerably over coming years.

Action 13 Increase the number of Accredited Landlords

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
13.1	Evaluate and review the accreditation criteria	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	June 2012
13.2	Publicise and remarket landlord accreditation	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	July 2012
13.3	Provide information and publicity at landlord events	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	Ongoing
13.4	Evaluate the National Landlords Accreditation Scheme	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	National Landlords Association	Ongoing

Objective 3

Improve conditions in the private housing sector

Action 14

Increase the number of houses in multiple occupation which are free from Category 1 Hazards

Rationale

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) include the very poorest quality in the private rented sector (PRS) and contain the most vulnerable tenants. HMOs are more likely to contain Category 1 Hazards than not.

Category 1 hazards are the most serious of the hazards taking into account the effect they are having, or could have, on the occupants. There are 29 hazards and each hazard is assessed separately.

There is evidence that there is unwillingness from some landlords to improve their properties even to the minimum legal standard, without intervention by the council. Given the difficult economic climate, there is a danger that landlords will limit expenditure and conditions will deteriorate. At the same time, demand for HMOs is expected to increase as a direct result of the welfare reforms designed to reduce under-occupancy in the single under 35s category.

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|---|------------|
| 14a) | The HMO cyclical inspection programme has been reviewed. | May 2012 |
| 14b) | The HMO cyclical inspection programme has been implemented. | June 2012 |
| 14c) | Licensing conditions have been reviewed | April 2012 |

Cyclical health and safety inspections are carried out on the 540 HMO's in the borough and significant problems are often found.

Action 14

Increase the number of houses in multiple occupation which are free from Category 1 Hazards

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
14.1	The number of cyclical inspections will be increased during the summer months.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	May 2012
14.2	Licensing conditions will be reviewed.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	Ongoing
14.3	Landlords of unsafe HMOs will be cautioned and prosecuted, if necessary.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team		Ongoing
14.4	Review and update HMO database with HMO risk matrix	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	August 2012
14.5	Targeting of higher risk premises.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	Ongoing

Objective 3

Improve conditions in the private housing sector

Action 15

Reduce the number of non-decent homes

Rationale

Widespread and significant problems relating to housing conditions were highlighted in the Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey 2009. In Darlington, nearly 34% of the private sector stock failed the Decent Homes Standard, compared with 16% in Stockton, 35% in Hartlepool and 36% nationally.

Approximately 60% of the failures were due to Category 1 hazards and the main hazard was excess cold. This hazard is closely linked to another Decent Homes criterion, poor thermal comfort, and is mainly caused by heating and/or insulation issues. These hazards are particularly prevalent in the private rented sector and in HMOs (see Action 14).

Addressing heating and insulation issues is likely to be the most effective way of reducing the number of non-decent homes.

Approximately 3,700 owner-occupiers and private tenants are living in dwellings with significant repair problems to one or more major structural elements in their home. The rate of disrepair in Darlington (9.2%) is above the national (7.3%) and sub-regional (8.9%) averages.

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|--|--------------|
| 15a) | The number of private sector properties with Category 1 hazards has been reduced. | April 2013 |
| 15b) | The number of private sector properties with High Scoring Category 2 hazards has been reduced. | April 2013 |
| 15c) | The number of residents living in non decent homes in the PRS has been reduced. | April 2013 |
| 15d) | The provision of home loans in the owner occupied sector has been explored by using the Bond Scheme. | October 2012 |
| 15e) | The number of Health and Safety risks in Private Sector Housing has been reduced. | April 2013 |

Reducing the number of non-decent homes will improve the health of occupiers, prevent accidents and reduce fuel poverty.

Action 15 Reduce the number of non-decent homes

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
15.1	Continue the reactive and proactive inspections of properties reducing Category 1 Hazards	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	April 2013
15.2	Continue the reactive and proactive inspections of properties reducing High Scoring Category 2 Hazards.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	April 2013
15.3	Record the number of homes that are returned to the decent homes standard following local authority intervention.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	April 2013
15.4	Record the number of homes that are returned to the decent homes standard following a Safe Homes Loan from the Home Improvement Agency.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team/Place Projects Team	Home Owners	April 2013
15.5	Record the number of homes that are made free from hazards that would otherwise pose a risk for occupiers.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Private Landlords	April 2013
15.6	Completion of the review of the Bond Scheme to deliver home improvement loans.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team/Place Projects Team	Regional Loans Scheme	October 2012

Objective 3

Improve conditions in the private housing sector

Action 16

Prepare and adopt a Private Rented Strategy

Rationale

The private rented sector (PRS) is increasingly being seen as an alternative tenure to homeownership and social housing. It is sometimes the only tenure that is available for an increasingly large section of society. However, concern has been raised about the condition of the PRS and its ability or suitability to house those who cannot secure a mortgage or qualify for social housing.

The existing Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2008 – 2012 includes the regulation of the PRS. However, it needs to be updated significantly in 2012/13.

Milestones

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|------|--|----------------|
| 16a) | A Draft Private Rented Housing Strategy has been completed. | July 2012 |
| 16b) | A Private Rented Housing Strategy has been adopted. Subject to cabinet approval. | September 2012 |
| 16c) | A review of the Private Rented Housing Strategy has been completed. | August 2014 |

Laying the Foundations; A Housing Strategy for England recognises the important role that the PRS plays in providing homes and identifies proposals to support its growth and capacity.

Action 16 Prepare and adopt a Private Rented Strategy

	How will we do this?	Lead	Key Partner	Date
16.1	Research best practice and prepare a Private Rented Strategy	DBC Private Sector Housing Team		July 2012
16.2	Publish strategy for consultation prior to adoption	DBC Private Sector Housing Team		August 2012
16.3	Adopt Private Rented Strategy. Subject to approval from Cabinet if required.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team		September 2012

Objective 3

Improve conditions in the private housing sector

Action 17

Reduce the number of empty homes

Rationale

Empty properties represent a wasted resource and a missed housing opportunity. The biggest problems are often experienced by those living near to problematic empty properties which attract anti-social behaviour or are eyesores. Reducing the 800 empty properties in the Borough will create positive improvement in neighbourhoods and encourage sustainability. Therefore, Darlington Borough Council has employed a dedicated Empty Property Officer to carry out the actions required to reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough.

Empty properties are evenly distributed in most wards throughout the Borough. Indeed, some empty properties are in high demand affluent areas. Likewise some of the priority wards have much lower levels of empty properties than would be expected. The Council will update its Empty Property Database to monitor the number and distribution of empty homes in the Borough.

A draft Empty Homes Strategy has been completed and the locations of the empty properties have been mapped.

Milestones

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|------|--|------------|
| 17a) | Empty Homes Officer employed | Feb 2012 |
| 17b) | Empty Property Database established | March 2012 |
| 17c) | Empty Homes Strategy completed | May 2012 |
| 17d) | Lease and Repair Project explored and given Cabinet approval | July 2012 |

There has been a reduction in the number of empty properties since 2010 but, over the long-term, the figures have been fairly static.

Action 17 Reduce the number of empty homes

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
17.1	Undertake an Annual Survey of owners of empty properties to determine why homes are empty.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Landlords and Developers	April 2012
17.2	Set up an Empty Property Investors' Register and an Empty Property Sellers' Register.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Landlords and Developers	Ongoing
17.3	Refer enquiries for prospective tenants to Compass Choice Based Lettings System.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Housing Options Team	Tees Valley Local Authorities and Registered Providers	Ongoing
17.4	Refer landlords to use the Compass Choice Based Lettings System	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Housing Options Team	Tees Valley Local Authorities and Registered Providers	Ongoing
17.5	Map empty properties	DBC Private Sector Housing Team	Xentrall	April 2012
17.6	Adopt Enforced Sale Powers where appropriate to recover Council Tax debt and other council debt.	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Legal services	Tees Valley Local Authorities	November 2012
17.7	Explore opportunities to lever in private finance to lease and repair targeted empty homes in Darlington.	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	North Star Housing	July 2012

Objective 4

Invest in the regeneration of key locations

Action 18

Agree and implement a revised Master Plan for Central Park

Rationale

The regeneration of Central Park has been identified in the Core Strategy as one of the top priorities for residential development. However, the number of dwellings has been reduced from 545 to 450 to reflect the declining market for flats and apartments. A revised Master Plan is being discussed in an effort to realise the potential of this flagship scheme. The revised Master Plan will include 15% Affordable Housing, a local centre and commercial development to supplement the recently completed Darlington College and Teesside University's Darlington Campus.

Phase 1, to include 250 dwellings and the local centre, is expected to commence in late 2012 with first completions expected early 2013.

Milestones

18a)	Revised Master Plan endorsed by Council	May 2012
18b)	Get Britain Building funding secured	July 2012
18c)	Outline planning consent including details for Phase 1 obtained	August 2012
18d)	Work starts on Phase 1	End of 2012
18e)	First new dwellings completed	Early 2013

Investment in housing and its external environment is an important catalyst for regeneration and for creating attractive and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Action 18 Agree and implement a revised Master Plan for Central Park

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
18.1	Consult with stakeholders and the public on the revised Master Plan.	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	Commercial Estate Group, Keepmoat, Yuill (CKY)	Feb 2012
18.2	Make consequential amendments to the Development Agreement..	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	CKY, HCA	July 2012
18.3	Refresh the Financial Appraisal.	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	CKY, HCA	July 2012
18.4	Revised Master Plan endorsed by Council.	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	CKY	May 2012
18.5	Detailed Planning Application for Phase 1 submitted.	CKY		May 2012
18.6	Formal consultation undertaken on Planning Application.	DBC Development Management Team		July 2012
18.7	Council formally considers detailed Planning Application.	DBC Development Management Team		August 2012
18.8	Begin implementation of Phase 1.	CKY		End of 2012

Objective 4 Invest in the regeneration of key locations

Action 19 Implement the remodelling plans for Cockerton

Rationale

The proposed remodelling of Cockerton will provide an opportunity to diversify the local housing offer and provide shared ownership and market sale housing alongside new social housing supply. It also provides an opportunity to increase the long term sustainability of the area through environmental improvements and address emerging issues of non-decency amongst council owned housing.

Specifically, the proposed regeneration in Cockerton provides an opportunity to decrease the oversupply of 1 bed flats, reduce the density of 2 bed flats and increase the supply of family homes to meet identified local housing need. It will also provide an opportunity to create a new quality external environment to support a green corridor, support sustainable modes of transport and access to existing cycle routes. It will consider the introduction of traffic calming measures, the future need for existing commercial premises and the renegotiation of existing public transport routes with commercial partners.

Milestones

19a)	An options appraisal for the Nickstream Lane shops has been completed	Sept 2012
19b)	77 LA properties demolished and cleared.	June 2013
19c)	60 new affordable homes developed	March 2014
19d)	A new quality open space and play area delivered	March 2014
19e)	Up to 28 new market sale homes completed.	March 2015

Critical to the success of regeneration is to create the climate, environment and culture that provides equality of opportunity for residents who live in those neighbourhoods, provides the correct infrastructure in the right locations to support the neighbourhoods and, create attractive conditions and confidence for investors

Action 19 Implement the remodelling plans for Cockerton

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
19.1	Complete Options Appraisal for Nickstream Lane Shops	DBC Programmes and Projects Section		September 2012
19.2	Transfer of land	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	Esh Group and North Star Housing	April 2015
19.3	Decanting of existing tenants	DBC Housing	Registered Providers & Private landlords	2012/13
19.4	Demolition of 77 properties	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	Esh Group and North Star Housing	2013
19.5	Provision of 60 new affordable homes	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	Endeavour	March 2014
19.6	Environmental Improvements	DBC Housing		March 2015

Objective 4

Invest in the regeneration of key locations

Action 20

Prepare and agree plans to regenerate Red Hall Estate

Rationale

Within the current economic climate new investment in the existing Council Stock will be more difficult to achieve but at least one major project will take place during the life of the strategy

This is part of a strategic plan to ensure the council's stock can meet modern expectations and changing needs. Key criteria will be ensuring that the right mix of properties is available to meet the needs of the local area and this may include the diversification of tenure

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|---|----------------|
| 20a) | Future funding options for regeneration considered | May 2012 |
| 20b) | Demand and supply for differing types of housing within the local market analysed | March 2013 |
| 20c) | Options appraisal for the future of Red Hall developed | September 2013 |
| 20d) | Local community consulted | March 2014 |
| 20e) | Development proposal produced | June 2014 |

The Localism Bill encourages a strong neighbourhood led approach to regeneration activity with residents being at the forefront of investment projects and decision making.

Action 20 Prepare and agree plans to remodel Red Hall Estate

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
20.1	Host workshop with key partners to consider future funding options and development vehicles	DBC Housing		June 2012
20.2	Conduct detailed needs and supply analysis	DBC Housing & DBC Programmes and Projects Section		March 2013
20.3	Bring together financial options and market analysis to develop options appraisal	DBC Programmes and Projects Section & DBC Housing		September 2013
20.4	Consult with tenants and other residents of Red Hall concerning options	DBC Housing		March 2014
20.5	Identify suitable development partners and agree development plan for approval	DBC Programmes and Projects Section		June 2014

Objective 4 Invest in the regeneration of key locations

Action 21 Prepare a Town Centre Fringe Master Plan

Rationale

The Town Centre Fringe has been identified in the Core Strategy as having the potential to contribute much more to the economy and quality of life of Darlington than it currently does. The Town Centre Fringe has the potential to provide an additional 650 dwellings, over the 2011-26 period, as well as new office accommodation and opportunities for redevelopment. New development and regeneration in the Town Centre Fringe will be key to delivering the vision for Darlington over the medium to longer term. Efforts to realise the area's potential will be co-ordinated through the Town Centre Fringe Master Plan, as well as other appropriate planning frameworks, taking account of constraints (such as flood risk) which will shape the eventual pattern and form of development and redevelopment there.

The emerging Making Places and Accommodating Growth Development Plan Document will allocate sufficient land to meet the housing requirement, for the Town Centre Fringe, set out in the Core Strategy.

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|--|----------|
| 21a) | Draft Master Plan published for consultation | May 2012 |
| 21b) | Master Plan approved by Council | Oct 2012 |
| 21c) | The Preferred Options of the Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD has been published | 2013 |
| 21d) | The Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD has been adopted | 2014 |

To maximise accessibility and minimize carbon emissions, the highest density development will be expected in the most accessible locations. These are the Town Centre and the Town Centre Fringe

Action 21 Prepare a Town Centre Fringe Master Plan

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
21.1	Identify potential housing sites in the Draft Master Plan for consultation.	DBC Urban Design, Environment and Sustainability Team		May 2012
21.2	Collate responses to consultation.	DBC Urban Design, Environment and Sustainability Team		July 2012
21.3	Through continuous engagement and a series of formal consultations, achieve widespread support for the Master Plan proposals.	DBC Urban Design, Environment and Sustainability Team	HCA, EA, HA, infrastructure providers, statutory undertakers, private sector, residents, voluntary sector.	Ongoing
21.4	Identify housing sites in approved Master Plan	DBC Urban Design, Environment and Sustainability Team		Oct 2012
21.5	Through negotiation and persuasion, direct public sector funding and private sector investment to the Town Centre Fringe.	DBC Programmes and Projects Section	HCA, EA, DEFRA, landowners, developers.	Ongoing
21.6	By focussing improvements in service provision on the Town Centre Fringe, enhance the quality of life of residents and improve the area as a business location.	Darlington Borough Council	DBC People Directorate.	Ongoing
21.7	Include preferred sites within the Preferred Options Making Places and Accommodating Growth DPD	DBC Planning Policy Team		2013

Objective 5 Provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access

Action 22 Offer Support to all households adversely affected by welfare reforms

Rationale

Published in February 2011, the Coalition Government's Welfare Reform Bill introduced a series of reforms to the welfare system. Detailed analysis has been completed on the financial implications for Darlington residents of the:

- i) change from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment;
- ii) reassessment of those currently claiming Incapacity Benefit and their transfer to Employment and Support Allowance;
- iii) under-occupation penalty for social housing tenants who have spare bedrooms, and
- iv) Household Benefit Cap.

It is estimated that by 2013, when all the changes have been implemented, there will be a £9.2m reduction in the benefits paid to Darlington's residents.

The affected residents have been identified and effective guidance and advice will be offered to prevent crisis and partially mitigate the adverse impacts.

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|---|----------|
| 22a) | Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) have been used effectively to minimise the negative impact of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) changes and prevented homelessness | Dec 2012 |
| 22b) | Landlords and other stakeholders have been made aware of any changes to the new DHP policy | Dec 2012 |
| 22c) | Social Rented Tenants affected by the introduction of a size criterion have been offered advice about more appropriate housing options | Oct 2012 |
| 22d) | The risks and mitigating actions that will need to be taken if housing cost payments are paid direct to tenants in the Social Rented sector have been identified | Dec 2012 |

Considerable progress has already been made to identify and advise those potentially affected by Welfare Reforms.

Action 22 Offer support to all households adversely affected by welfare reforms

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
22.1	Review the DHP policy and include any updates on the website	DBC Revenues and Benefits Team		April 2012
22.2	Offer appropriate advice to existing tenants affected by the LHA changes when transitional protection expires	DBC Revenues and Benefits Team	Housing Options	Jan – Dec 2012
22.3	Ensure DHPs awarded for customers affected by the LHA changes are linked to the provision of appropriate housing advice	DBC Revenues and Benefits Team	Housing Estates	Jan – Dec 2012
22.4	Advise landlords and other stakeholders of any changes to the DHP policy	DBC Revenues and Benefits Team		Apr – Dec 2012
22.5	Identify Social Rented Tenants affected by the introduction of a size criterion and provide appropriate advice	DBC Revenues and Benefits Team	Housing Estates	Jan 2012 – Dec 2012

Objective 5 Provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access

Action 23 Integrate appropriate houses in multiple occupation into Key Point of Access System and maintain strong links with Bond Scheme to maximise the use of private sector housing.

Rationale

Tenants living in HMO's are more likely to be vulnerable and much more likely to require housing related support. Landlords with HMO's are also much more likely to require additional housing support with their tenants. Providing support will reduce the problems that landlords and tenants experience and will result in longer sustained tenancies. This will reduce homeless applications.

Providing a bond to secure a tenancy can be difficult. Providing advice and information and access to a bond will enable more private sector tenants to secure accommodation.

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|---|----------------|
| 23a) | Landlords and tenants of HMO's are aware of the KPA and Supporting People Services. | September 2012 |
| 23b) | Landlords and tenants of HMO's are aware of the bond scheme. | September 2012 |

The Darlington Bond Scheme provides security for landlords by undertaking to indemnify against loss or damage to the property up to a previously agreed amount.

Action 23 Integrate appropriate houses in multiple occupation into Key Point of Access System and maintain strong links with Bond Scheme to maximise the use of private sector housing

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
23.1	Provide information on KPA's referral role to the owners of HMO's	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Housing Options Team	Voluntary Sector Providers Supporting People	Ongoing from May 2012
23.2	Provide information on Bond Schemes to the owners of HMO's	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Housing Options Team	700 club and job centre plus	Ongoing from May 2012
23.3	Provide information on KPA's referral role to the tenants of HMO's	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Housing Options Team	Voluntary Sector Providers Supporting People	Ongoing from May 2012
23.4	Provide information on Bond Schemes to the tenants of HMO's	DBC Private Sector Housing Team & Housing Options Team	700 club and job centre plus	Ongoing from May 2012

Objective 6

Action 24

Provide effective support and opportunities for vulnerable groups

Prepare and adopt a Supported Accommodation Strategy

Rationale

A wide range of issues have been identified in relation to housing people with support needs. The development of the Key Point of Access continues to provide an excellent source of information in this area. The Council’s objectives of providing more choice and independence and providing accommodation and support that help to prevent the transition to higher dependency services will drive the Supported Accommodation Strategy . It will cover all forms of supported housing across all client groups. It will be developed in conjunction with the new Homelessness strategy

Based on an assessment of needs the Strategy will consider the options that should be available from being supported in normal accommodation to the range of specialist accommodation that should be on offer. It will identify any under or over supply and the fit with current and future needs including types of tenure.

As part of the work an Extra Care Housing Strategy will be produced that will form an Appendix to the report.

Milestones

24a)	The current and future needs and aspirations of people with support have been clearly understood	September 2012
24b)	A plan for the range of accommodation options offered to people with a support need has been approved	December 2012
24c)	Delivery plan has been included in revised Housing Action Plan	December 2012
24d)	Review of Delivery Plan	Annual

A Supported Accommodation Strategy will provide the framework for the individual’s attainable wishes to be built into their future plan, so they can choose who they live with, where they live and who supports them to live there.

Action 24 Prepare and adopt a Supported Accommodation Strategy

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
24.1	Review role of sheltered housing and Extra Care in the context of meeting wider community needs	DBC Housing		April 2012
24.2	Consider the appropriateness of current provision of supported accommodation in the context of strategic objectives	DBC Housing		June 2012
24.3	Consider the implications of the Welfare Reforms on Supported Accommodation and in particular on "Move on".	DBC Housing		July 2012
24.4	Consider the strategic direction of the commissioning of support	DBC Housing	DBC Supporting People	July 2012
24.5	Produce Final draft for approval	DBC Housing		September 2012

Objective 6 Provide effective support and opportunities for vulnerable groups

Action 25 Update and adopt a Homelessness Strategy

Rationale

There was a significant decline in the number of homeless households between 2002 and 2009 and a corresponding increase in households supported through housing options and advice. However, a significant number of changes have taken place since 2009 when the current strategy was developed that now require a full review of the Council's approach to Homelessness and the production of a new strategy. This will provide an opportunity to take stock of the implications of these changes.

The new Housing Strategy plus the implications of the Localism Act and the Welfare Reforms represents a further set of changes that will have a fundamental impact on the planning of future delivery of services

This strategy will be developed in conjunction with the Supported Accommodation Strategy

Milestones

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------|
| 25a) | The pattern of Homelessness is understood | May 2012 |
| 25b) | A Homelessness Strategy has been approved | December 2012 |
| 25c) | Delivery Plan has been included in revised Housing Action Plan | December 2012 |
| 25d) | Delivery Plan reviewed | Annual |

There were no reported incidences of "sleeping rough" in Darlington in 2011.

Action 25 Update and adopt a Homelessness Strategy

How will we do this?		Lead	Key Partner	Date
25.1	Review changes to the delivery of Homelessness services since 2009	DBC Housing	DBC Housing Options	April 2012
25.2	Consider the appropriateness of current service provision in the context of strategic objectives	DBC Housing	DBC Housing Options	June 2012
25.3	Consider the implications of the Welfare Reforms on the delivery of homelessness services and access to suitable accommodation	DBC Housing	DBC Housing Options	July 2012
25.4	Consider the strategic direction of the commissioning of support	DBC Housing	DBC Supporting People	July 2012
25.5	Produce Final draft for approval	DBC Housing		September 2012