

**Consultation document on the Vision
and Priorities for the revised Housing
Strategy for Herefordshire
2010 – 2013**

This is your opportunity to comment

**If you need help to understand this document, or
would like it in another format or language, please
call Melissa Walker on 01432 260014 or email
mwalker1@herefordshire.gov.uk**

Introduction

Welcome to the consultation document on the proposed vision, priorities and objectives for the revised Housing Strategy for Herefordshire.

The Housing Strategy is important because it sets out the future priorities for housing policy which will: influence planning policy approaches (through the Local Development Framework); set out how we will help people who are in need of housing; promote the independence of local people; and, identify the services we will provide to improve the quality and range of housing across the County.

In this document you will find the proposed vision for housing in Herefordshire, and a set of priorities, each with a number of objectives, to help us achieve our vision over the next three years.

It is not the full strategy – this will be written after the consultation, and your views will help to shape the final Housing Strategy document. The timetable for the review process is outlined on page 4.

We would really like to hear your views on the proposed vision, priorities and objectives, and would like you to tell us what actions we should take over the coming years, to help us achieve our vision. A questionnaire is attached which we would be grateful if you could complete and return by 28th May 2010.

Your views are really important, and we would really like to know what you think. All your comments will help to shape the final Housing Strategy.

Why are we revising the strategy?

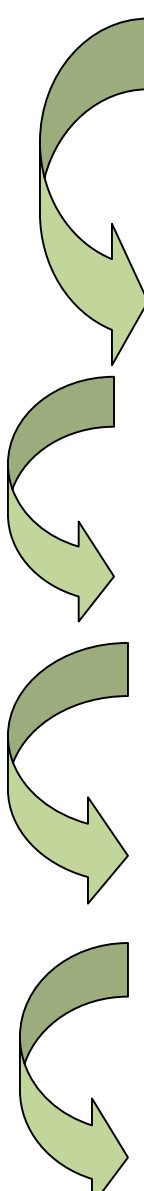
The previous Housing Strategy ran from 2005 to 2008, so it is time that we re-looked at our future policy direction.

There have also been many changes in the national and regional economy and housing policies over the past eighteen months, which have affected the local housing market, jobs, income and the availability of credit. All these factors will impact on local people and change the housing market, the demand for different types of properties and the number of new homes being built – particularly affordable homes and those needing support to live independently.

It is therefore important that our Housing Strategy is up to date, reflects these changes and sets out our response.

➔ The review process

The evidence base included a review of progress against the previous strategy; key statistics such as population changes; house prices and levels of deprivation; outcomes from Parish Plans; Housing Needs Surveys, outcomes from recent consultations with local people; Herefordshire Voice Survey; progress against key performance indicators; local, sub-regional and regional plans and strategies; and National Housing Policy



Step 1 – we developed an evidence base to bring together current information on housing

Step 2 – we used this evidence base as a basis for the vision, priorities and objectives in this consultation document

Step 3 – to consult on the vision, priorities and objectives with the consultation ending on Friday 28th May 2010

Step 4 - to assess the feedback from the consultation and draft the Housing Strategy based on this feedback by the end of June 2010

Step 5 – to launch the final Housing Strategy in July 2010



We are here



Highlights from the evidence base

- ☞ There are approximately 81,000 dwellings in Herefordshire, of which approximately 2,000 are empty.
Source: Herefordshire Council Key Housing Facts Sheet January 2010
- ☞ The median average house price in July-September 2009 was £185,000, and median average earnings in April 2009 were £19,986. Herefordshire had a higher ratio of house price to income than the regional and national figures in 2008.
Source: Herefordshire Council Key Housing Facts Sheet January 2010
- ☞ The number in temporary accommodation in Herefordshire (October-December 2009) was 97, and the main reason for homelessness in the last quarter was the termination of assured shorthold tenancies.
Source: Herefordshire Council Key Housing Facts Sheet January 2010
- ☞ The number of households presenting as being homeless and then accepted, steadily increased since 1998-99, before falling between 2004-05 and 2006-07. Numbers have again increased since 2006-07.
Source: State of Herefordshire Report 2009
- ☞ **Tenure**

	Herefordshire	West Midlands	England
Detached House or Bungalow	43%	24%	23%
Semi-detached House or Bungalow	27%	38%	32%
Terraced (including end terraced) House or Bungalow	18%	24%	26%
Flat, maisonette or apartment - In a purpose built block of flats or tenement	7%	11%	14%
Flat, maisonette or apartment - Part of a converted or shared house (includes bedsits)	2%	2%	4%
Flat, maisonette or apartment - In a commercial building	1%	1%	1%
Caravan or other mobile or temporary structure	1%	0%	0%

Source: State of Herefordshire Report 2009

Overall affordable housing needs:

- Based on population forecasts - 325 units per year to 2011, then 229 per year until 2026
- Based on Home Point figures - 780 units per year until 2013
- Based on outside consultancy figures - 1113 units per year until 2026
Source: Herefordshire Council Key Housing Facts Sheet January 2010

- ☞ After the Examination in Public of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in Summer 2009, the Panel inspecting the RSS recommended that 18,000 dwellings be built in Herefordshire between 2006-26. The RSS is the overarching planning document guiding housing development in the West Midlands Region.

- ☞ The Centre for Urban & Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham, carried out a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Shropshire, Herefordshire, Telford & Wrekin and Powys, published in February 2008. The CURS report concluded that 83 additional pitches are required in Herefordshire in the period 2007 to 2012, and a further 26 pitches between 2012 and 2017.
Source: State of Herefordshire Report 2009

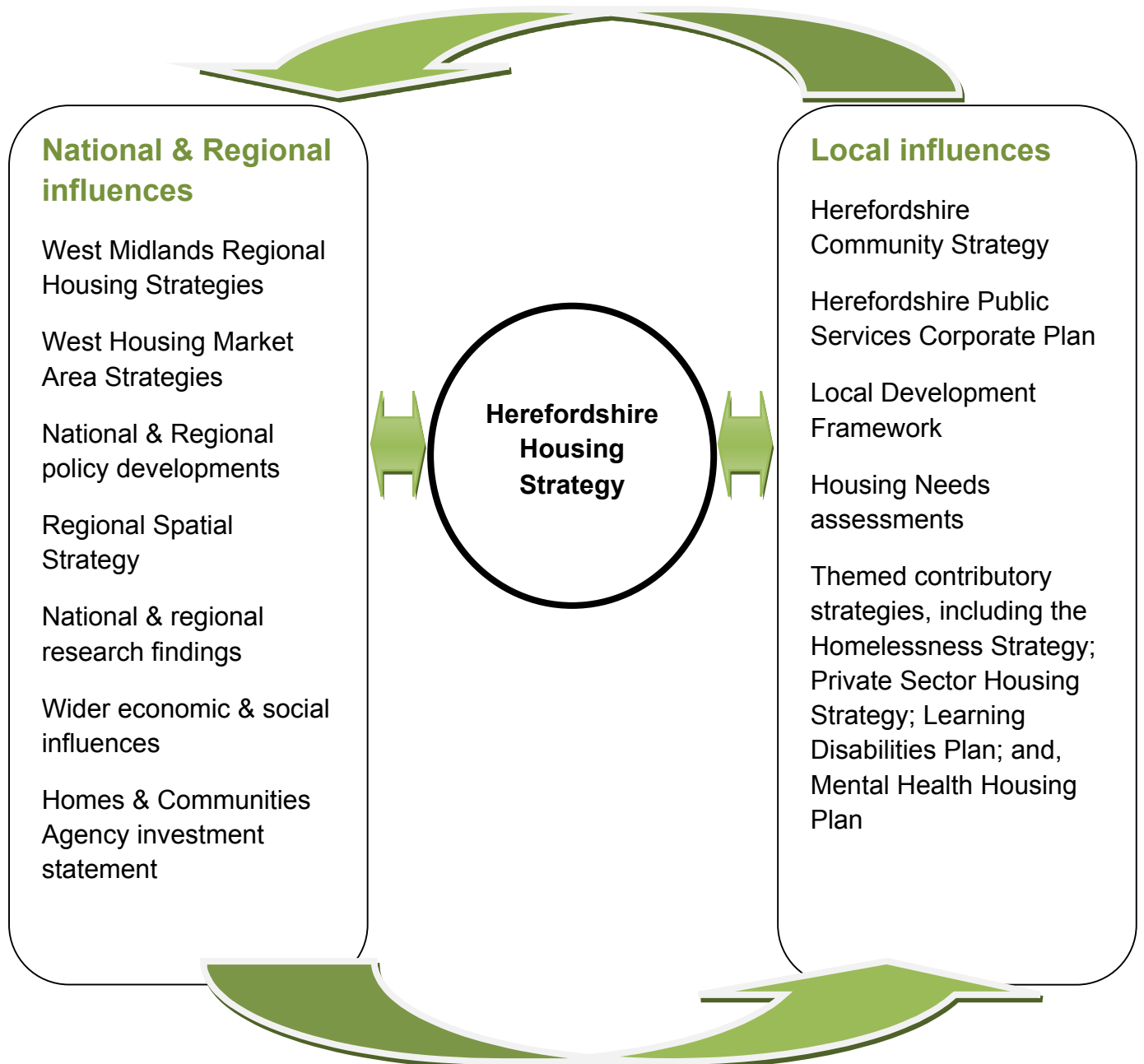
- ☞ The latest housing condition survey commissioned by Herefordshire Council took place in 2005, with the report published in 2006. It was a sample survey of around 1,000 dwellings. The survey assessed Herefordshire's housing stock under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS). 34% of dwellings in Herefordshire failed the 'Decency Standard'. The majority of dwellings that failed the 'Decency Standard' did so due to poor thermal efficiency.
Source: State of Herefordshire Report 2009

Further information on facts and figures regarding housing is available from the following sources:

- **State of Herefordshire Report 2009. Available on the Herefordshire Partnership website: www.herefordshirepartnership.com.**
- **Herefordshire Council Key Housing Facts Sheet January 2010, along with other housing studies and reports, including Housing Market Assessments, Housing Needs Assessment. Available on the Herefordshire Council website: www.herefordshire.gov.uk**
- **Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008 for the West Market Housing Area. Available on the Regional Assembly website: www.wmra.gov.uk**

➔ Why is the Housing Strategy important?

The Housing Strategy is important because it influences key local and regional strategies and policy making. The diagram below shows where the Housing Strategy sits in terms of other housing strategies, the Local Development Framework and other related documents.



Note: These are not exhaustive lists

The Vision

The proposed vision is based on the evidence base (step 1 of the review process). The vision looks towards what can be achieved up to 2020, the same time period as the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy. The Housing Strategy focuses on the actions we need to take between now and 2013 to help achieve our vision.

The proposed vision is:

By 2020 housing in Herefordshire will be more appropriate and affordable for local people, supporting community cohesion and sustainability. Housing will be of a high quality, increasingly energy efficient and suitable for the diverse needs of the community.

We need to know when we have achieved our vision. So, we will identify a set of indicators, based on the final vision, priorities and objectives, to tell us. We will monitor these indicators and report on our progress in subsequent reviews of this Strategy.

Priority 1 – To achieve a more balanced housing market

Why is this an issue?

We know that Herefordshire has a high house price to income ratio (high house prices and low average incomes) and that the affordability of local housing has been raised as a priority in Parish Plans, the Community Strategy, Housing Needs Surveys and other local strategies and surveys.

We also know that the type of housing in Herefordshire is out of kilter with the regional and national picture, with significantly more detached homes than the regional and national average, as well as a lower percentage of socially rented homes than the regional and national averages.

The population of Herefordshire will grow over the coming years and the proportion of older people will increase. There will also be a greater number of young adults. It is important that future housing development is designed to take these changes into account.

There will be significant development and regeneration opportunities across Herefordshire which could be utilised to address any housing imbalance.

What is our aim?

Our aim is that Herefordshire has a balanced, flexible housing market which can respond to changes in demand, changes in the economy and support regeneration within Herefordshire. In particular, ensuring that housing is as affordable as possible to local people and that there is a choice of housing options available across all tenures.

The objectives

1. Work in Partnership to increase the number of new affordable homes in sustainable rural locations, to meet the needs of the community, whilst ensuring that new housing minimises its environmental impact.
2. Increase the number of housing completions to meet the levels required in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Working closely with the Planning department to develop planning policies which enable the development of affordable housing in areas of need.
3. Support the development and implementation of Hereford as a Growth point.
4. Work in partnership with key agencies to anticipate and meet the changing needs of housing demand and the housing market and promote a range of housing opportunities.
5. Work proactively with partners on regeneration initiatives and housing development opportunities, including key regeneration proposals within Hereford City.
6. To identify and pilot innovative housing solutions, particularly linked to economic development opportunities.

Actions

What actions do you think we need to take to achieve this priority?

Please tell us in question 4 on the questionnaire.

Priority 2 – Decent homes

Why is this an issue?

Housing quality can impact on health, and under the provision of the Housing Act 2004 a new method of assessing the condition of a dwelling called the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) was introduced in 2006.

The Herefordshire House Condition Survey identified 40% of properties that were not decent using the HHSRS. Local people have also told us in consultations that housing condition is a high priority. In addition, approximately 1% of dwellings in Herefordshire are empty properties, many having been identified in Housing Needs Surveys within Parishes.

In 2005, nearly 11% of households in Herefordshire were in Fuel Poverty and it is estimated that this figure will have doubled due to rising fuel prices and the economic downturn. There is concern that few properties are future proofed against fuel poverty.

A combination of poor housing conditions, low average earnings, energy inefficient homes, and empty dwellings continue to be important housing issues in Herefordshire

What is our aim?

Our aim is to improve the condition of homes across Herefordshire, to reduce the numbers of empty properties, and to limit the impact of fuel poverty and climate change.

The objectives

1. Improve the condition of homes across all tenures, so that more achieve the Government's Decent Home Standard.
2. Improve the condition of houses in multiple occupation; particularly ensuring health, safety, management and licensing requirements are met.
3. Review the Empty Property Strategy and implement its actions in partnership with other bodies, as the way we reduce the number of empty properties.

4. To encourage a reduction in domestic related carbon emissions and the number of fuel-poor households through the implementation of the Herefordshire Affordable Warmth Strategy and the provision of the Special Energy Efficiency Scheme.

Actions

What actions do you think we need to take to meet achieve this priority?

Please tell us in question 4 on the questionnaire.

Priority 3 – Meeting the needs of vulnerable households

Why is this an issue?

We know that most people wish to remain within their own homes for as long as possible; particularly older people and vulnerable adults. This may mean that the person needs additional support or that their home needs adapting. The person may also require additional assistance to keep their home in a decent condition.

We also know that other more vulnerable groups of people, or those with specific needs, such as people with a learning disability or people suffering from substance misuse, may also wish to live more independently and require a higher degree of support in their housing choice.

What is our aim?

Our aim is to support those people who wish to live more independently, through adapting existing and new homes and providing a range of housing with appropriate support to meet their needs.

The objectives

1. Work in partnership with key housing organisations and customers to ensure equitable access to support services and greater access to information about the range of housing solutions available, particularly for vulnerable people and the socially excluded.
2. Develop and support adaptation schemes to enable more people, particularly those who are older or have physical disabilities, to stay in their own home.
3. Support services which help people to remain in their own home, such as the Home Improvement Agency and the Herefordshire Handyperson scheme
4. Work in partnership to assess the need for different types of housing, and ensure that resources are deployed where they are most needed to respond to this demand.
5. Develop a countywide policy to provide solutions for the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Actions

What actions do you think we need to take to achieve this priority?

Please tell us in question 4 on the questionnaire.

Priority 4 – Preventing homelessness

Why is this an issue?

Herefordshire continues to experience high levels of demand for homelessness and housing advice services. This has been a particular issue during the economic downturn, with Herefordshire Council having seen an increase in the number of people applying and becoming accepted as being homeless.

The Regional Spatial Strategy has also identified the need for more homes to be built in Herefordshire, including affordable homes to tackle homelessness.

Becoming homeless has also been raised as a priority issue by vulnerable groups in Herefordshire, including those with mental health issues, the Gypsy and Traveller community and young people.

What is our aim?

Our aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, as prevention is the key to protecting the people of Herefordshire.

The objectives

1. To prevent homelessness through the effective targeting of housing advice and services.
2. To end the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation and to continue to reduce the overall number of households in temporary accommodation.
3. To provide access to sufficient accommodation across all sectors and ensure support is available for people who are, or who may become, homeless.
4. Improve joint working amongst all agencies concerned with homelessness and prevention .
5. To reduce homelessness and its related impacts amongst vulnerable client groups including young people and children.

6. To maximise the effectiveness and targeting of homelessness services through the use of improved data collection and intelligence gathering.

Actions

What actions do you think we need to take to achieve this priority?

Please tell us in question 4 on the questionnaire.

The actions we need to take

Actions to achieve the vision and priorities

We are interested in your views about the actions we need to take to achieve the vision and the above four priorities. On the questionnaire, question 4 asks you for your ideas.

Other wider issues and actions

The evidence base also identified a number of housing issues which impact on all four priorities, and we would be grateful for your views on the actions we need to take to support these as well. The issues we identified are:

- How we can ensure a wide range of high quality, supported housing and specialised housing related support for vulnerable people.
- Geographic differences across Herefordshire, which affect the way housing is provided and developed.
- Access to generic services relating to housing.
- The changing economic situation, which may impact on the services we provide in the future.
- Minimising the impact on the environment from new housing development.
- Innovation and best practice.
- How you can be involved in the future.

Question 5 in the questionnaire asks for your thoughts and any actions you can suggest. We will then incorporate these into the priorities as relevant.

Measuring progress

We would also be grateful for your views on how we can measure our progress towards the vision and objectives. Question 6 in the questionnaire asks for your ideas on how we can do this.



How we will do it!

The full Housing Strategy will contain an action plan, based on the final vision, priorities and objectives. The action plan will be developed from the responses to this consultation document and will be the most important way in which we will achieve the vision and priorities.

We will monitor how we are doing against the action plan and report this progress to the Housing Partnership and the Herefordshire Partnership.

We will also identify a set of local performance indicators so that we know when we achieved our vision and priorities. These performance indicators will also be monitored and reported back to the Housing Partnership and the Herefordshire Partnership.

We will work with a wide range of partners through the Housing Partnership, the Homelessness Partnership, the Supporting People Partnership and others to take forward the actions.

The progress we will have made towards achieving our action plan and our local performance indicators will be used as a basis for the next review of the Housing Strategy.

We want your views!

We would really like to hear your views on our proposed vision, four priorities and objectives, and would like you to tell us what actions you think we should take over the coming years, to achieve them.

Your views are really important, and we would really like to know what you think. All your comments will be considered and will help to shape the final Housing Strategy.

How to respond

You can comment using the questionnaire accompanying this consultation or by returning it by email to: mwalker1@herefordshire.gov.uk

Or by post to:

Melissa Walker
c/o Herefordshire Council Research Team
Freepost SWC4816
PO Box 4
Hereford
HR4 0BR

The deadline for responses is Friday 28th May 2010.

For further information

If you require any further information or would like someone to talk to your Group, organisation or network about this consultation, please contact Melissa Walker.

Further copies of this consultation document and questionnaire are available on the Herefordshire Council website - www.herefordshire.gov.uk

Glossary

Community Strategy - Brings together the shared vision and priorities of local people, organisations, networks and sectors within an area.

Growth Point – A designation of some larger towns and cities within the Region which enables funding and support to be available for towns and cities to pursue large scale sustainable growth, including housing.

Herefordshire Partnership – The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Herefordshire, comprising public, private, community and voluntary organisations committed to improving quality of life in Herefordshire.

Housing Needs Assessment – A report detailing the current provision of housing across the County, examining the housing related issues in the context of geography, economy and socio-demographic profile of Herefordshire.

Housing Needs Surveys - Surveys undertaken across Herefordshire in order to assess the need for affordable housing.

Housing Partnership – A partnership of key housing commissioners, stakeholders and providers involved in housing issues in Herefordshire.

Local Development Framework (LDF) – The LDF sets out land use and planning policy at a local level.

Parish Plans – A statement from a local community about how it sees itself developing over the following years.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) - A regional planning framework which sets regional land use and planning policy, including housing numbers and distribution across the West Midlands.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) – A term which can include community housing associations, housing associations, housing partnerships and local housing companies.

Supporting People Partnership – A partnership of key organisations which works to ensure that the Supporting People Programme provides the most appropriate housing-related support services.

Sustainable - Living in a way which has a positive effect on the environmental, economic and community wellbeing of an area.