

A Housing Strategy for Luton

2015 – 2020

Delivering, maintaining and improving housing for all

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Introduction

Luton continues to face significant housing problems. It has a number of characteristics which are shared with many of the London boroughs including overcrowding, high levels of homelessness, variable conditions in the private rented sector and amongst landlords and shortage of good quality land suitable for house building. The latter is further compromised by the low values attainable through newbuild with many private sites stalled awaiting an improvement in the economic climate.

Government changes to the way new affordable housing is delivered has impacted on new provision with fewer Registered Providers (Housing Associations) seeking development funding for development in Luton and this has reduced the numbers of new affordable homes delivered locally over the period of the current funding regime.

The impact of changes to welfare benefits is still being assessed but rent arrears have increased slightly and it has not been possible to meet the increased demand from clients who need to downsize. A further concern relates to the potential for families caught by the cap in benefits through the introduction of the Universal credit cap moving from more expensive areas surrounding Luton, particularly London.

Whilst the council is aware of these problems and has developed this strategy in consultation with partners and stakeholders to try to show how it proposes to tackle the major issues it faces it also acknowledges that it is unable to meet all demands placed upon it. It is essential therefore to target its limited resources and the action plan attached to this strategy attempts to do this.

On a more positive note the achievements made since the last strategy was developed include improvements to rent collection from council tenants, several hundred new affordable rented homes delivered with options for those who can afford to enter the shared ownership or ownership markets through mixed tenure, the delivery of decent homes in the public sector on target, the establishment of a local housing partnership, introduction of a cold weather night shelter for street homeless, improved arrangements to access private sector leased properties for homeless families and the introduction of a licensing and landlord accreditation scheme to improve conditions in the private sector stock.

This list is not exhaustive but highlights some of the many improvements made over the last four year and demonstrates the council's commitment to deliver good quality housing to all.



Councillor Tom Shaw, Executive portfolio holder for housing

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About Luton

Luton is a unitary authority situated in the southern part of the former county of Bedfordshire about 30 miles north of London and close to other major conurbations such as Milton Keynes and Cambridge (see appendix 4). It is geographically small and is almost totally built up with few remaining significant development opportunities. Luton has attracted a progression of different nationalities and cultures into the town over the last hundred years, mainly for employment. The most recent inward migrants are mainly from Eastern Europe and Africa and these new residents have added to the rich cultural mix within the town but have also increased pressures on the housing stock.

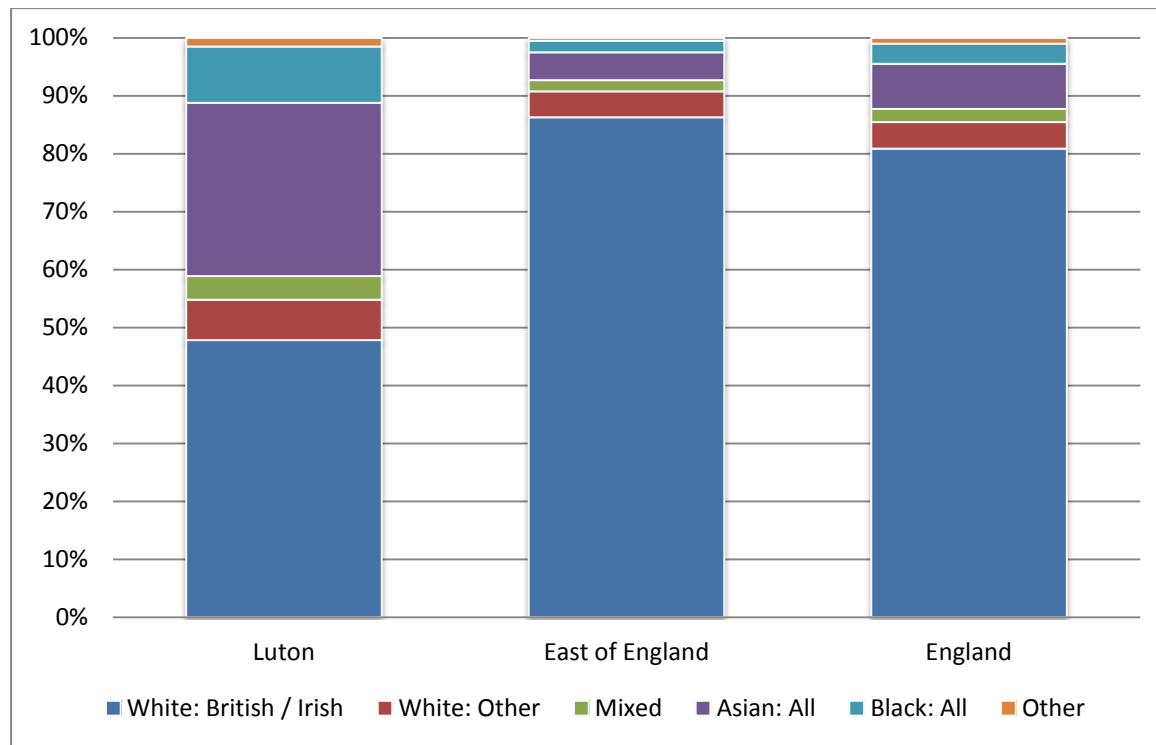
Population

Luton is one of the largest towns in South East England, The official estimate of the population of Luton is 208,000 for 2013. A combination of a high birth rate and high migration has led to an increase in the population in recent years. With an area of 4336 hectares, this translates into a population density of 48 persons per hectare which is greater than many London Boroughs. The population is projected to rise to 220,350 by 2030, a rise of 7.5%.

According to the 2011 Census, the age structure of Luton's population differs from that of the population as a whole. Luton has a younger population than that of England and the eastern region. The under 15 age group account for 22 per cent of the Luton population compared with 18 per cent regionally and nationally. The 15-64 age group account for 67 per cent of the Luton population compared with 66 per cent nationally and 65 per cent in the eastern region. The "Over 65" age group represents 12% of the Luton population compared with 16 per cent nationally and 18 per cent regionally.

The town is ethnically diverse, with approximately 55 per cent of the population being of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) origin, with significant Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, East European and African Caribbean communities. The chart below shows how diverse the population of the town is:

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Source 2011 Census

In recent years the numbers of residents from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland has increased dramatically with an estimated 10,000 new east European residents recorded on the 2011 census compared to the one 10 years earlier. This adds to the cultural mix within the town but increases pressure on the limited housing stock. Of the 33 rough sleepers identified in the town in November 2014 60% were from eastern Europe.

Economy

Gross Value Added (GVA) is a measurement of economic activity and GVA per head in Luton is £21,658 which Luton is 7 per cent lower than the national average.

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According to the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) there are 83,300 jobs in Luton. There are now more service sector jobs than manufacturing ones but manufacturing employment is still higher than the national average and has remained stable since the loss of many jobs from Vauxhall. Major employers in Luton are Luton Borough Council, Luton NHS, Easyjet, TUI UK Ltd, Monarch Airlines and General Motors.

Luton Airport is a major employer in the region and also a strong driver of the economy of Luton. An analysis of employment of the airport carried out by Luton Borough Council in 2011 showed that 8,100 people were employed at the airport.

Average weekly earnings of people living in Luton are £479 per week which is less than the national average of £518 per week. The average weekly wage of those who work in Luton (but don't necessarily live in Luton) is £486 which is slightly higher than the residence based figure but lower than the national average.

The claimant count unemployment rate in Luton is 2.1 per cent which is the same as the national average and higher than the regional average of 1.5 per cent. Unemployment is highest in Northwell (3.4 per cent), Biscot (3.0 per cent), Dallow (2.9 per cent), and South (2.6 per cent) wards. Whilst unemployment is lowest in Bramingham (0.6 per cent) and Barnfield (0.7 per cent) wards.

Deprivation

Luton is ranked as the 69th (out of 326) most deprived local authority. In 2007 Luton was ranked as the 87th most deprived local authority and in 2004 as the 101st. This indicates that Luton is becoming relatively more deprived in comparison to the other local authorities of England. Luton has nine output areas in the top ten per cent most deprived areas in the country. Two of these are in Biscot, Dallow and Northwell wards and one each in Farley, High Town and South wards. Research by the Centre for Research in Social Policy showed that about a third of children in Luton are living in poverty.

Land Availability

Luton is a geographically small borough and has very little land available for new development. Residential development has been and will continue to be focussed on brownfield sites. This adds to the cost of development which impacts on viability of schemes in a depressed market. A number of former industrial sites around the town centre have planning permission for small private flats and many of these sites remain undeveloped due to the market conditions and uncertainty about lending although there are signs that the market is improving slightly.

Influences on the Strategy - National

The key message from central government is to reduce local government expenditure which includes housing services. This is being achieved with a prolonged period of cuts in funding which is having an increasing impact on councils. Luton is disproportionately badly affected by these grant cuts due to the high level of properties in the district within low council tax which reduces its ability to raise income through residential taxation.

Specific issues:

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England (2011)

This outlines the Government's key thoughts and aspirations for housing and introduced a number of key new policies to help more people into home ownership, to increase provision of new homes and improving support for older and vulnerable clients. The main areas of impact locally has been the New Buy guarantee although it is not possible to quantify levels of take up and the increase in the level of Right to Buy discount. This has had a dramatic impact in Luton with a 100% increase in completions in the first half of 2014/15 compared with the whole of the previous year.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7532/2033676.pdf

Localism Act (2011)

The act has brought about a number of major changes that affect housing. These include:

- changes to how council housing is allocated – a new allocations policy has been agreed locally and will be fully in place in Spring 2014. This will restrict applications to current residents of Luton, remove the quota for homeless applicants and allow discharge of homeless duty through the private sector
- the abolition of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy and its replacement with HRA self-financing, which allows local authorities to control their own rental income. We have refinanced and are now clear on what funding is available within the HRA for investment in existing stock and for new provision
- amendments to homelessness legislation to allow local authorities to discharge their duty by offering accommodation in the private rented sector. See above

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Overall the act aims to shift decision making away from central Government back into the hands of individuals, communities and local authorities.

Welfare Benefit Act (from 2013)

A phased introduction of change to welfare benefits which includes the introduction of Universal Credit, a single benefit for working age people, a cap on maximum benefit payable, a reduction in benefit for social housing tenants who are under occupying their homes (bedroom tax) and the replacement of Council Tax benefits with local schemes. These will have a direct impact on many residents through reductions in benefits and may lead to increased rent arrears issues for the council.

National Planning & Policy Framework 2012

Promotes simplification of the planning process to promote sustainable growth and provides a framework for councils and local people to produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans. It requires local councils to prepare a strategic Housing Market Assessment (see local influences below).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

Care Act 2014

The new Act will change impact on residents receiving care by pulling together all elements of care provision for the first time. It introduces a national eligibility criteria, a right to independent advocacy and, from 2016, a cap on care costs faced by self-funders. It also offers assistance to carers. The link below provides access to a range of informative factsheets from the Department of Health

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets/care-act-factsheets--2>



Influences on the strategy - Local

Increases in demand for affordable housing is evidenced in the numbers listed on the councils housing register with over 10,000 individuals and families now registered. This reflects the reduction in delivery of new affordable homes and the lack of available homes in the private rented sector where landlords are experiencing increased demand from families and councils from London. The demand and resulting shortage in supply has forced prices up and has reduced availability to local families and also to LBC.

Homelessness is a significant issue locally with over 800 families in temporary housing currently. The lack of supply has forced greater use of Bed & Breakfast regularly. Many families have been forced to stay in B&B for longer than the Governments guidelines despite the council's best efforts to identify new sources of temporary housing. This is extremely unsatisfactory for the families caught in this position and costly for the council.

LBC Corporate Plan 2014 – 2017

This sets out the Council's vision and values following detailed consultation with residents and refers back to the 2013 Prospectus which set out the councils response to the changing economic environment. This had, at its heart a three point plan:

- to increase income from business growth
- to better equip residents of all ages to get jobs through investment in education and training
- to work efficiently with all partner organisations to ensure the most vulnerable in the town are safe and supported

The table below shows how the Councils key strategic priorities support the three themes of the prospectus

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PRIORITIES

PROSPECTUS

Business & Growth	Create a vibrant environment where businesses thrive and prosper
	Protect and enhance the quality of the natural and built environment
Education and lifelong learning	Improve life and learning opportunities and skills for all
Safe, supported and healthy	Empower, support and protect the vulnerable
	Improve health and promote health equality
	Reduce crime, antisocial behaviour and the fear it causes
	Strengthen community cohesion
Crosscutting	Ensure a financially sound and efficient Council

The full document can be found at:

http://www.luton.gov.uk/Council_government_and_democracy/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Policy%20and%20Performance/CorporatePlan.pdf

Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008 – 2026

This was developed by the Luton Forum and sets out a shared vision of what It hopes Luton will look like in 2026 and how partners will work together to achieve this. Good quality housing is a key element of this strategy.

<http://www.luton.gov.uk/Business/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Regeneration/Luton%20Forum%20Final%20SCS%205.6.pdf>

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

The JSNA is a key strategic document highlighting the current and future health and wellbeing needs for adults and children in Luton. The document acknowledges the links between poor quality housing and poor health and identifies specific areas of the town where this is demonstrated clearly. These include the Dallow, High Town, Biscot and Saints electoral wards. It should be acknowledged that these inner areas located close to the town centre also

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score highly in indices of multiple deprivation so have other influences on levels of poor health. The JSNA has helped target housing activities to the areas indicated above and investment through the Decent Homes Assistance scheme has been committed into these areas as well as the loft extension program.

The JSNA is currently being updated during 2015.

http://www.luton.gov.uk/Council_government_and_democracy/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Consultation/Reports/Final%20JSNA%202011.pdf

Adults with Learning Disabilities Joint Commissioning Strategy

The emphasis is on provision of supported housing for suitable clients and we have delivered a number of such schemes to provide new homes for clients with learning disabilities. Residents with autism are included in this need group and discussions are taking place to secure access to housing for clients with this condition.

http://www.luton.gov.uk/Health_and_social_care/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Our%20Plan%20-%20Adults%20with%20Learning%20Disabilities-%20Joint%20Commissioning%20Strategy.pdf

Luton's Investment Framework 2015 - 35

This draft document sets out the councils plans for investment over the next 20 years and housing is very much at the heart of it recognising the importance of good quality housing on the health and well being of residents and development of children. It features specific actions to increase delivery of new homes and improving existing homes in the town.

<http://www.luton.gov.uk/Business/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Luton-Investment-Framework-2015-2035-DRAFT.pdf>

Annual Public Health Report 2013/14 – The wider determinants of Health (LBC)

Housing is a major area addressed within this report recognising that poor quality housing impacts on physical and mental health and focuses specifically on housing in poor physical condition, overcrowding, fuel poverty, homelessness and accidents in the home. It also considers the impacts of fuel poverty and the housing strategy demonstrates what measures the council and its partners are taking to combat this amongst Luton residents.

Luton & Central Bedfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) – refresh 2014

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This updates previous assessments and helps identify the correct level of future housing provision. It provides guidance and support to policies and assists with the development of the local plan for both Luton and Central Bedfordshire. It shows an overall need for a further 890 new homes per year to be produced in Luton over the period 2011 – 31 and breaks down into tenure types (see table below).

	Dwellings (no)	%
Market Homes	12,700	71.6
Intermediate affordable homes	1,300	7.3
Social/Affordable rent homes	3,800	21.1
Total	17,800	100

Per annum 890

This is broken down further into sizes of homes needed and shows a fairly even spread of 1, 2 & 3 bedroom affordable rent units with a smaller number of 4+ bedroom homes. However it acknowledges that Luton will only be able to deliver 6000 new homes within its boundaries in this period due to land availability, a shortfall of significant proportions.

Recognising this the SHMA also considers how this provision should be met and refers to the Duty to Cooperate between councils when preparing their local plans as required under the Localism Act 2011. Dialogue between Luton and Central Bedfordshire about how Luton's housing need can be addressed has taken place but without clear agreement to date.

Local Housing Partnership

The Local Housing Partnership has informed the development of the strategy. The membership consists of residents, representatives from local groups and agencies including housing associations and lettings agents. It meets quarterly and will be instrumental in monitoring the success of the strategy by checking progress against the action plan.

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It has reviewed the key housing statistics for Luton and has agreed the key priorities for this strategy and welcomes actions that will improve the councils offer under the green agenda.

Tenant Advisory Board (TAB)

The council tenant and leaseholder resident participation structure in Luton is headed by an elected board of 7 tenant and leaseholders which perform a strategic overview of tenant involvement and are part of the formal process for tenant participation. They also advise and make recommendations on strategic housing issues.

Specific areas of operational activity are monitored and reviewed by Service Area Panels (SAPs) again with 7 members. These groups are able to look more closely at the operational side of our service and make recommendations for change. These panels focus on:

Asset Management

Tenancy Management

Income Management

Sheltered Housing

Leaseholder matters

Key Strategic Housing Priorities

1. Tackling Homelessness

Homelessness is at record levels in the town with many families stuck in poor quality rented units or Bed & Breakfast due to lack of new provision and increased demand within the private sector.

The level of approaches and acceptances continues to increase (see table of acceptances below) but the council is trying to reduce acceptances where possible whilst still meeting its statutory responsibilities.

Reason for homelessness	2009 -10	2010 - 11	2011 - 12	2012 - 13	2013 - 14	Totals
Parental Ejection	55	108	164	173	213	713
Relative/Friend Ejection	38	77	166	196	195	672
Relationship Breakdown non Violent	4	11	32	35	44	126
Relationship Breakdown Violent	37	68	131	143	151	530
Mortgage Arrears	9	13	32	28	42	124
Rent Arrears LA	1	2	5	6	14	28
Rent Arrears HA	2	3	10	5	17	37
Rent Arrears Private	6	12	39	34	41	132
Loss of AST	10	34	63	46	36	189
Termination of AST	3	0	73	147	230	453
Other Loss	18	55	72	94	112	351
Institution/Care	2	7	20	44	41	114
Refugee/Asylum Seeker Determination	13	14	20	9	7	63
Other inc Emergency return from Abroad	5	6	23	29	26	89
Totals	203	410	850	989	1169	3621

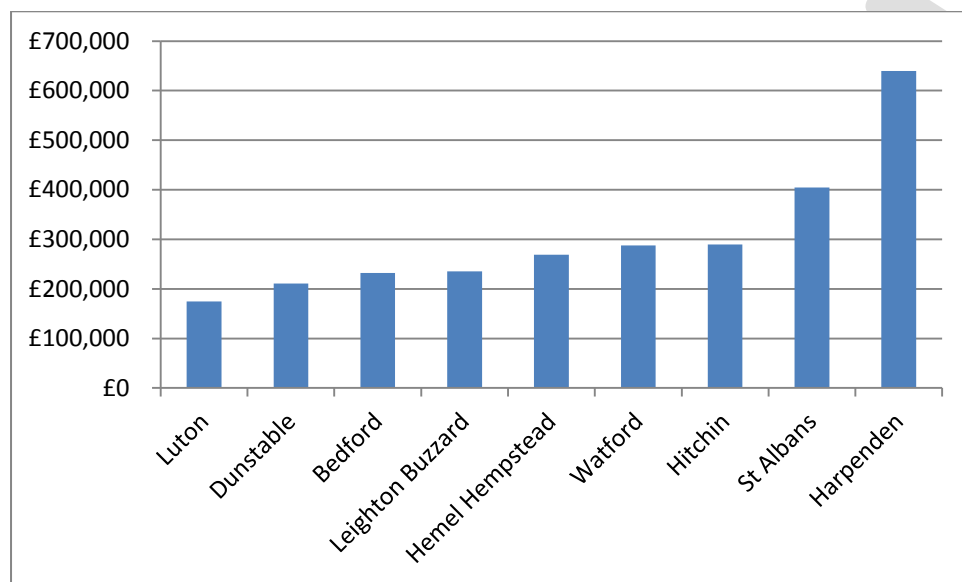
This shows not only a year on year increase in acceptances since 2009/10 resulting in 1169 cases in 2013/14 being accepted as homeless. This puts an immense strain on all types of temporary housing in the town and the council has been forced to use expensive and unsatisfactory Bed & Breakfast accommodation more frequently with over 100 families placed in B&B on a regular basis. It also impacts on availability of other

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temporary housing (mainly leased through private sector agencies) particularly as some landlords are now withdrawing homes from the council with offers of higher rent from individuals and London Boroughs.

There have been very large % increases in those accepted due to termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs), people leaving institutions or care, rent arrears across all tenures and relationship breakdown over this period but consistently the largest number of acceptances comes from families who have been ejected by friends or families.

The problem is exacerbated by inward migration into Luton, particularly from London as Luton offers affordable housing compared to many of its neighbours and all London Boroughs. Table below shows average sale prices (all property types)



Source Zoopla

In response to the increased demand and silting up in B&B the council has been forced to open its first hostel for families since the mid 1980s but move on from this is still slow due to lack of permanent housing. It has also negotiated a number of leasehold arrangements in newly

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converted commercial units with 160 self contained flats coming on stream to reduce the need for Bed & Breakfast rooms and to replace some of the poorer quality rented units.

Single homelessness

Whilst there is a reasonable level of provision for single homeless in Luton provided mainly by independently run charitable hostels there remains an unanswered demand, particularly for clients with other social or behavioural issues. YMCA are looking to open a hostel in Luton to offer solutions to those single homeless in need of housing. Current difficulties surround the increasing number of single homeless who have complex needs as it is difficult to find suitable accommodation within the general provision.

Rough sleeping seems to be on the increase in the town with 33 confirmed cases identified in November 2014. This followed detailed work with partner agencies and places even greater demands on existing hostel provision in the town.

2. Increasing housing supply

The council has been proactive in the delivery of new affordable homes utilising partnerships with RPs and developers, most notably the New Homes for Luton (NH4L) joint venture with Wates and Catalyst HA. This will have created nearly 370 new homes over its life and has demonstrated that shared ownership is a viable option for both customers and providers. It has also delivered a range of training and educational benefits along with contributions to community development in the localities where new homes have been built.



New homes delivered by the NH4L joint Venture at Hart Hill

To achieve high levels of affordable new homes the council has traditionally contributed its own land to support the program but this is becoming more and more difficult with a need to realise a capital receipt for sites to support other key programs.

Despite this it has only been possible to deliver around 125 new homes in the last year and a similar number is projected for 2014/15.

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New flats at Hafeez Court (Luton Community HA on LBC former garage court producing eight new homes)

Using its own resources and to try to increase supply the council built its first new council homes in 2013, a small development of accessible bungalows for older residents.



New council homes at Hamel Court

Further LBC units will be built as sites arise (mainly former council garage courts) and two sites will be delivered in 2014/15.

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The council also successfully negotiated with the Highways Agency to acquire around 35 surplus houses and bungalows which had originally been acquired for the widening of the M1. Many of these were occupied but the purchase prevented nearly 30 new cases of homelessness.

Detailed negotiations on the delivery of new affordable homes on a former council recreation centre site are almost complete. This will provide a further 80 new affordable homes using private finance and without access to grant or other public subsidy.

During 2015 it is proposed to establish a wholly owned housing development company to deliver more homes with further potential benefits arising for LBC.

Sales of LBC stock have again increased in number following the Governments revamp of the Right to Buy scheme but sales receipts are being used where possible to support new building programs – this will not however replace the same number as sold resulting in a reduction in affordable stock in the town.

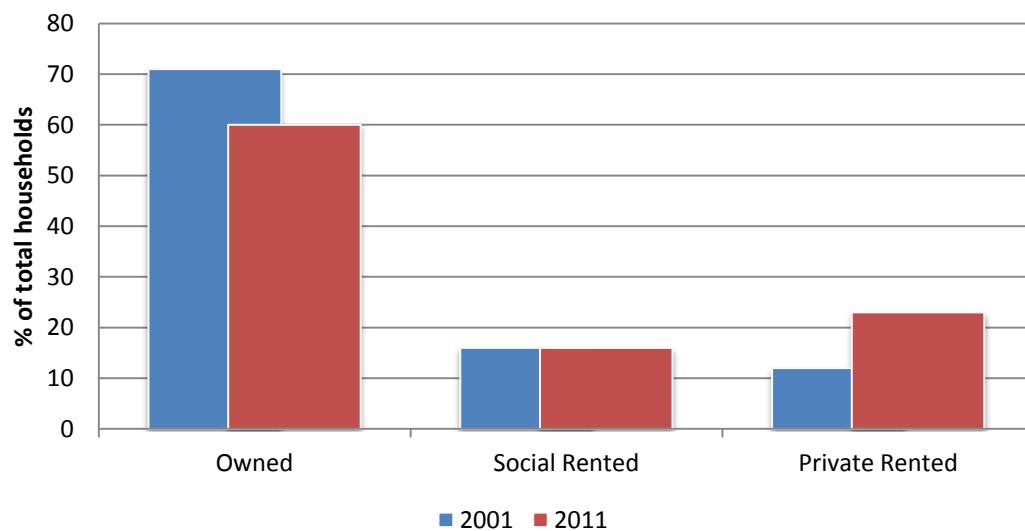
Due to Lutons unusual situation where build costs are comparable to the neighbouring area and London but values are far lower it has not been possible to secure affordable housing through planning gain (S106) for some time now due to viability issues and in fact many private sites with planning permission have stalled due to the precarious property market locally and nationally. This has restricted supply of new private homes for owner occupation but has increased demand for shared ownership units, currently being delivered through the NH4L partnership.

Tackling empty homes has been and will continue to be part of the councils activity to increase supply and whilst interaction and dialogue with the owners to provide guidance and advice is seen as the key to this enforcement action is currently under way in the form of a Compulsory Purchase action and a small number of Enforced Sale cases but this is only where all efforts have been made to work with the owner have failed.

We have committed to support self build schemes in Luton where possible.

3. Improving housing conditions

The housing stock in Luton is made up of mainly owner occupied housing with a relatively small % of social rented homes. The private rented sector has increased over the last ten years (see table below). Despite investment into affordable housing by the HCA and the council itself the % of social rented homes remains the same in 2011 as in 2001.



source 2011/2001 census data

The increase in the private sector has created opportunities for both landlords and tenants but conditions remain variable and one of the key priorities for the council is to ensure that good quality accommodation is available within all sectors. To improve this in the private sector the council has introduced a Landlord Accreditation scheme and has extended its licensing scheme to include all houses in multiple occupation

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(HMOs). We are currently recruiting new staff alongside other statutory agencies and non statutory bodies to deliver a Rogue Landlords project. This will target homes that are overcrowded, not well maintained and in addition will be the basis for our work on 'Beds in Sheds'.

Successful enforcement action has been taken where evidence can be gathered with a number of successful prosecutions against landlords who fail to maintain their properties at the expense of the occupants. We will continue to use all powers available to ensure landlords accept their legal and moral responsibilities to maintain their properties.

The Council owned stock of 8,000 homes is well maintained and continues to meet the decent homes standard. A clear asset management strategy is in place and we have a cyclical replacement/improvement programs are in place. Attention is given to ensuring that any works done contributes towards improvements to the thermal efficiency of the dwelling. Solar photo voltaic panels are fitted to existing properties where appropriate with advantages to both tenant and LBC as owner through the feed in tariff.

Management and maintenance of the councils stock is monitored through quarterly tenant led Service Area Panels which in turn report back to the main Tenant Advisory Board (TAB).

To improve thermal efficiency of LBC housing stock we have commissioned a £7m contract to provide external wall insulation to non traditional blocks.

The council is also looking to deliver it's own energy company to offer cost effective power to residents. This is in its formative stages at present but we will work to check viability to move this forward as quickly as possible recognising that fuel costs are high and stretch the limited budgets available to many residents.

A council led healthy heating scheme as been in operation in the town for some time. This offers assistance to residents who have insufficient means to provide an adequate level of warmth in their home and provides a means tested grant based boiler replacement scheme and emergency heating in extreme cases through a radiator loan scheme. All opportunities to secure additional funding from external sources to improve thermal efficiency within dwellings are sought.

We are investigating increasing space available in dwellings through extensions and loft conversions to avoid the need to move large overcrowded families to a new home where possible.

A refurbishment program has started in the communal areas in LBC sheltered stock creating more welcome shared areas for recreation alongside the introduction of an activities coordinator across all sites to promote exercise and activities.

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Newly refurbished communal room in Acworth Court



New housing at Marsh Farm (artist's impressions)

Targeted investment into the 'paths' estate in High Town has commenced to try to tackle age related design issues and anti social behaviour. We have worked carefully with residents and ward councillors to agree the extent and range of activities which will include restricting access/egress from the estate, improved lighting and CCTV alongside other environmental improvements.

The regeneration of the central area of the Marsh Farm estate, another 70's Radburn designed locality is about to commence with contractors selected. This will involve the demolition of the Purley centre losing residential and retail units. These will be replaced over the next three years creating an improved central focus to the estate and better and more viable shopping. The planning for the redevelopment of this area was helped by a small steering group of interested residents and representatives who have worked closely with the council over the past two years.

4. Being the Landlord of Choice

It is important that the council is viewed as a landlord who offers options and quality to its tenants and not a landlord of last resort.

To do this we have:

Restructured the LBC housing team to improve efficiency

Made training a priority to ensure that staff are knowledgeable and able to deal with approaches directly

Created close links between tenants and their own generic housing officer

Improved the quantity and quality of improvements for tenants with a disability

Improved the offer to sheltered tenants:

- activity coordinator in place
- and silver surfing opportunities being created in all blocks
- improved common rooms

Made sure repairs are done correctly first time to avoid recalls

Created an appointment system for repair work

Shown active resistance to anti social behaviour

Committed to resident involvement

Reported on performance in key areas regularly to tenants through Service Area Panels (SAPs)

Developed closer working with health partners to improve health and well being of residents

Delivered new warm and cost effective homes

Procured training, apprenticeships, work placements for residents through the NH4L program

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Offered 12+ apprenticeships in building trades each year through our own Building & Technical Services

Agreed to bid for funding for Homelessness change program to support young homeless people into training and employment

Trained staff to become Green Deal assessors to further promote energy efficiency and thermal comfort in our properties

Agreed to offer workplace experience for local community group to assist with start up project

To increase and improve the offer from LBC over the length of this strategy we will:

Further develop the Green Deal offer through our own staff to give confidence to residents

Investigate use of new technology with a national supplier to improve thermal efficiency of our homes at low cost

Develop more workplace experience for residents to assist in search for employment

Coordinate more volunteer's placements to assist in search for employment

Work within corporate structure to support 60 troubled families back into work

Allow residents to join with us on inhouse training to increase knowledge and awareness

Introduce a rents and repairs loyalty & rewards scheme for residents similar to the Irwell Valley 'Gold Service'

Further increase the councils offer on affordable warmth and fuel poverty

Investigate further opportunities to assist Stronger (troubled) Families back into employment

Consultation & Monitoring

To date consultation on the strategy has been restricted to elected members tenant representatives and the Local Housing Partnership. This h has a wide representative base and will be the main group alongside internal performance monitoring structures to monitor progress against planned actions. As the strategy develops further additional consultation will take place as the strategy is recognised as a living document and will need updating over time.

Funding the strategy

The majority of actions proposed to deliver this strategy are already funded through existing agreed annual revenue budgets, mainly through the Housing Revenue Account where this offers improvements to existing stock or benefits to tenants. The maintenance of LBC owned stock, planned and responsive, is addressed through the asset management plan operated by BTS and again is funded annually through budgets agreed by the council.

Construction of new council homes is funded through HRA capital budgets

General Fund activity which includes homelessness, other development activity including support for housing associations, grants to private home owners and enforcement activities within the private sector are all subject to annual budgets.

As indicated earlier in this document the delivery of this strategy is also dependent on support from other departments of the council and partner agencies and budgets are in place and agreed for actions listed.

Appendix 1

Action Plan 2015 - 2018

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Appendix 2

List of internal contacts

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Chair of Tenants Advisory Board - Tony Gamble



contact Richard Beattie (above)

Appendix 3

Empty Homes Strategy 2015 -2020

This is a supporting document and is currently under development

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APPENDIX

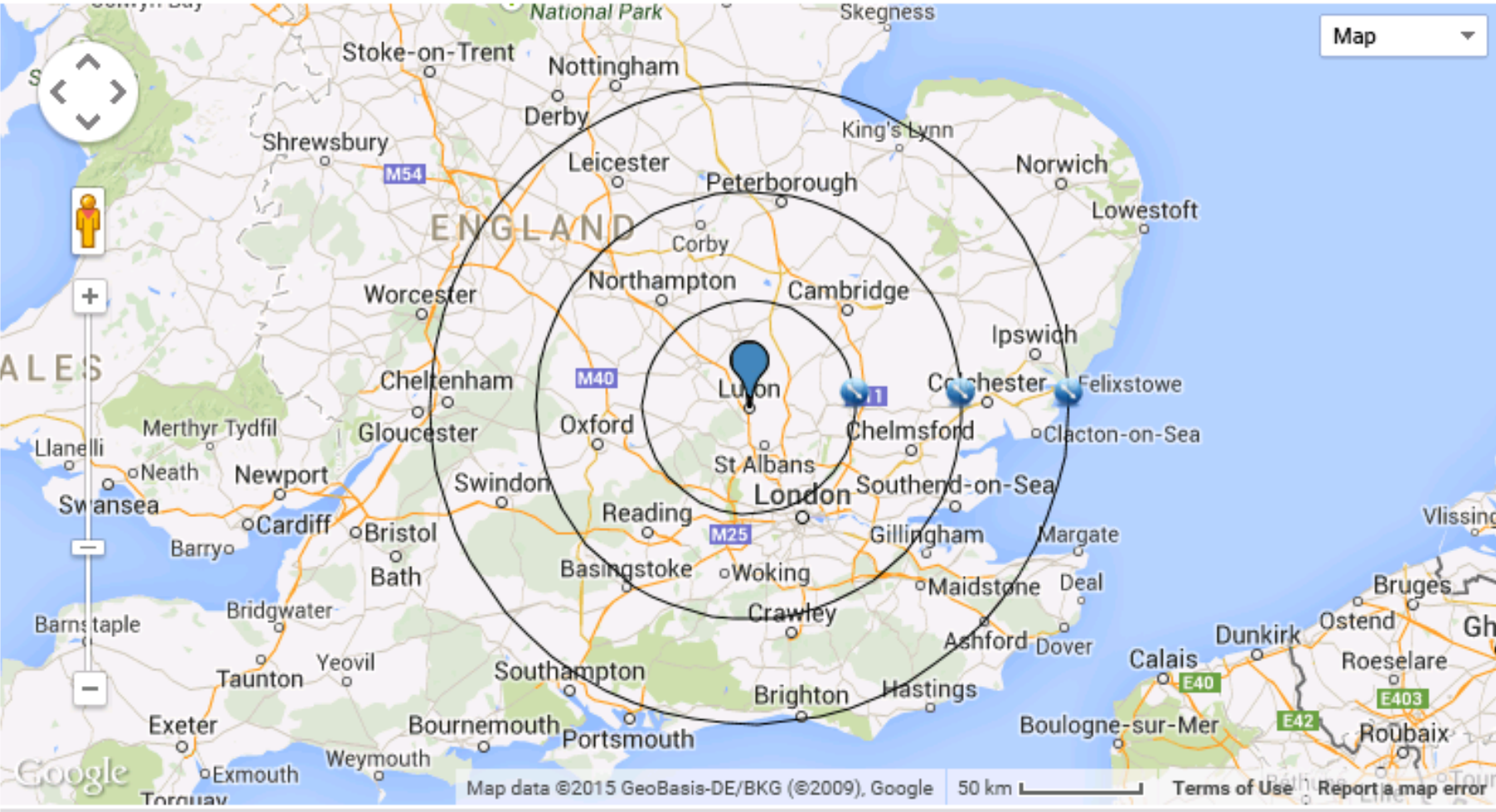
Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2020

This is a supporting document and will be developed later in 2015

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Appendix 5

Luton – location



Luton showing proximity to London and other major southern towns and cities. Map shows radii of 25, 50 and 75 miles