

— 21st Century Kent –
— Unlocking Kent's Potential —

Kent Forum

Better Homes: localism, aspiration and choice

May 2011

A Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway

Better Homes: localism, aspiration and choice



A Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway

Contents

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	7
Setting the Scene	11
Theme 1: Managed Growth and Infrastructure	14
Theme 2: Place-making and Regeneration	28
Theme 3: Affordability and Choice	35
Theme 4: Housing Renewal	44
Theme 5: Housing Need	49
Kent and Medway Strategic Housing Market Assessment	56
Implementation	62
Method Statement	65
Glossary	66

Foreword

Housing is much more than bricks and mortar.

Good, decent homes are the springboard for stable family life. They underpin economic growth and create the great communities that give the county of Kent, including Medway, its amazing character.

For some though, getting on to the housing ladder is proving to be tough. Demand outstrips supply, the availability of mortgage financing is patchy and the quality of housing varies hugely from one part of the County to another.

For the young, the difficulties of 'staying local' can disrupt the traditional family networks upon which strong communities are based.

For families, uncertainty over housing can undermine the contribution they make to our economy through work and active citizenship.

For Kent's increasing elderly population, the demand for homes that meet their changing needs is growing.

This County-wide Housing Strategy is the first of its kind in the country. Working with our partners in local Councils and housing groups across Kent and Medway, it sets out pragmatic approaches to enable the delivery of the right mix of homes in the right locations.

This is NOT a strategy to secure housing for everyone who claims to need it.

Kent and Medway believe in supporting our local communities first. There are significant national - and international - pressures on housing but we believe our task is to focus on local need and local availability.

Our priorities are based on making Kent better for Kent people. Our strategy is about quality, dignity and opportunity.

Why now?

Historically, it is in times of financial and social pressure that the biggest leaps forward in housing policy are taken.

So by working together, the Kent Forum of local authority leaders want to ensure that housing is fit for the future, delivers for Kent families and can keep our economy moving.

We aren't waiting around. We're getting on with the job of meeting these challenges now.



Paul Carter
Leader of Kent County Council
Chair of Kent Forum



Executive Summary

I. Context

The county of Kent offers the South East's greatest opportunity for economic growth and private-sector led recovery.

Kent is open for business and is not waiting around for government to decide what our growth should be. Local housing and planning authorities are already re-considering their housing growth ambitions in light of the forthcoming abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies. The removal of centrally-imposed targets will give these authorities the freedom to determine, at a local level, the growth required to meet local need and aspiration.



Authorities in Kent and Medway and the Homes and Communities Agency are committed to ensuring the delivery of managed growth, to support economic recovery in Kent and the wider South East.

The coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review has made clear that public funding for housing will be severely limited in the future. In a world of diminishing resources, the public and private sectors will need to work together creatively and innovatively to bring strands of resource together to deliver homes across Kent and Medway.

2. The challenges

There are a number of key housing challenges facing Kent and Medway that must be tackled:

1. The need to secure the **delivery** of new homes
2. The imperative to achieve **regeneration** of key brownfield sites across the County
3. The need for **renewal** of existing homes and the return to use of **empty homes**
4. The challenge and opportunity of improving the **energy efficiency** of existing homes
5. The need to consider the needs of **vulnerable groups** and the support services they require

3. Our ambitions

In response to these challenges, we have identified a number of key ambitions that we want to deliver across Kent and Medway.

These are:

1. The continued **delivery** of key **infrastructure** to support **managed growth** and **housing delivery** across the County.
2. The continued **regeneration** of our **disadvantaged neighbourhoods** to bring them in line with more affluent parts of the County.
3. The provision of **choice** and **affordability** in housing for the citizens of Kent and Medway, including rural communities, which meets their needs and aspirations.
4. The managed improvement and **retrofit** of existing homes to make them fit for now and the future.
5. To support **vulnerable people** in housing need to fulfil their potential and live a high quality life through the provision of excellent housing and support services.

4. Our approach

To deliver our ambitions in the current and future climate, there are significant barriers that will need to be overcome.

The public, private and third sectors will need to work together to create an environment in which new housing growth can be delivered. At the same time, vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities must continue to be supported.

We will achieve this by:

1. Setting out the managed **housing growth** and **infrastructure** ambition for Kent and Medway.
2. Working creatively and innovatively to **secure** the **investment** needed to unlock sites for housing delivery.
3. Using **publicly-owned** land and other **assets** to drive housing delivery and economic growth.
4. Working with government to **reform** the existing **regulatory framework** and **remove barriers** to development.
5. Developing new and innovative approaches to **regenerate** housing in our most **disadvantaged communities**.

5. Our asks of government

To deliver our ambitions we also need government to play its part.

We therefore ask them to:

1. Simplify the **regulatory framework** for development, to help get growth in Kent moving again.
2. Support and enable the delivery of the proposals within **Growth without Gridlock: A Transport Delivery Plan for Kent**, to help deliver major regeneration across Kent.
3. Incentivise public agencies to make **public sector land** available for **development** purposes, providing local authorities with the **flexibility** to share more of the **risk** in order to reap better **rewards** upon completion.
4. Support people's **aspirations for home ownership** by offering variants on shared ownership models and finding new ways of financing a wider range of innovative mortgage products.
5. Encourage investors to invest in the **private rented sector** in the same way they currently do for other property asset classes.
6. Give local authorities **more powers** to be able to use **local products** that respond to local requirements, flex rents and make greater use of intermediate tenures.
7. Support the funding of **retrofit** and the development of wider solutions to improve existing homes.

8. Ensure that Kent and Medway do not suffer a **disproportionate rise in new housing benefit claimants** as an unintended consequence of proposed housing benefit reforms.



6. The purpose of this Strategy

This Strategy describes the strategic direction for housing across the county of Kent, based on the local ambitions and aims of the Districts, Boroughs and Medway Council. It is unique in that it looks across a whole county area and brings District, Borough, Unitary and County Council ambitions together in a bottom-up approach.

It provides clarity on the major strategic housing challenges facing Kent and Medway; acknowledges that past ways of working may not be fit for the future and offers recommendations that stakeholders across Kent and Medway can collectively embrace to tackle these challenges as appropriate.

It does not propose a 'one size fits all' approach but provides a menu of solutions to assist local housing and planning authorities in achieving their local aims.

The economic downturn has exacerbated existing challenges, created new ones and has made it harder for both the public and private sector to respond to these issues.

However, it has also created an environment where innovation can thrive. The scarcity of resources and the need to maximise value for both the public and private purse has provided the opportunity for organisations in the public, private and third sectors to consider new joint ways of tackling common problems.

Organisations will need to be open to new pragmatic ways of working to realise the ambitions of this Strategy.

The Strategy is both an inward-facing and an outward-facing document. It seeks to encourage organisations across Kent and Medway to realise the benefits of a shared approach to common problems where collectively it will add value. It also seeks to influence government in a way that will benefit Kent and Medway.

The coalition government has announced a series of proposals that will radically alter the way housing and support services are delivered. The majority of these proposals are still in the initial planning and consultation phase and it would not be appropriate for the Strategy to take a position on these without further details.

We are therefore committed to refreshing this Strategy when more clarity on the proposals is available and we are able to determine their potential impact on the County.

In the interim, we shall seek to influence government as they work up their proposals, to try to ensure that what emerges benefits Kent and Medway.

Introduction

The Kent Forum Housing Strategy takes a new, radical look at housing and how it is delivered and has been developed directly under the auspices of the Kent Forum.

It proposes pragmatic solutions on issues where a Kent and Medway perspective can add value and contribute to delivery of local ambitions.

This document has been developed collaboratively between Kent and Medway local authorities, Kent Partnership, Kent Economic Board and other public, private and third sector organisations with an interest in housing. It is the outcome of analysis, discussion and consultation on the major housing challenges facing us now and in the future.

The Strategy has been produced as we look to come out of the deepest recession for a generation, with long term impacts on the housing market. Yet as demand from a growing and ageing population continues to rise, Kent and Medway are faced with the major challenge of providing choice and meeting local aspiration and housing need.

This Strategy seeks to provide innovative ways of making this happen and creating homes and communities across Kent and Medway. It is supported by a range of detailed technical papers, evidence and research, which will be available on the Kent Housing Group website.



1. Why do we need a Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway?

The county of Kent, including Medway, is unique in its diversity of housing. There are significant differences in housing need, quality and condition, which require different solutions. This Strategy is therefore not proposing a 'one size fits all' approach.

Statutory responsibility for housing and planning lies with the District, Borough and Unitary authorities within Kent and Medway. The statutory framework for housing delivery and local priorities are already set out in Local Development Frameworks, Local Plans and Housing Strategies produced for Medway and each Kent District. This Strategy does not seek to replace these statutory documents, but aims to complement them.

With the forthcoming abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, local housing and planning authorities will no longer have centrally imposed housing targets that they are required to meet. Housing growth can be determined locally, at an appropriate level to meet local need and aspiration.

However, to secure adequate investment for the whole of the County, a bottom-up co-ordinated approach to housing growth across Kent and Medway is required, bringing together District, Borough and Unitary ambitions into a single county ambition for managed growth.

2. What do we want to achieve?

We want to see housing put in place that meets the needs and aspirations of all Kent and Medway residents, now and in the future.

We want to see local housing and planning authorities in Kent and Medway deciding their own housing numbers, based on local people's need and ambitions for growth.

By using innovative and flexible approaches to finance and regulation we will encourage managed growth that makes a lasting and positive impact.

We want to see our coastal and urban communities revitalised and our rural areas thrive and prosper.

We want all people in Kent and Medway to have the opportunity to choose to live in a high quality home, in the place they want to live.

By creating balanced communities, we will support people, whatever their needs, to fulfil their potential and live the best life they can.

By listening to what people want, we will provide homes and communities that they can be proud to live in.

2.1 The key principles

Through a process of wide-ranging stakeholder engagement, we have identified 6 shared principles, which partners highlighted as critical to create a fit for purpose county-wide Housing Strategy. These are:

(i) Encouraging and supporting pragmatic joint working to solve common problems

More pragmatism and joint working should take place across public sector agencies (the potential value of this joint working has been demonstrated by community budgeting), between the public and private sector and between the public and third sector. Value and opportunity can be created by taking a pragmatic look at joint solutions, be it leveraging economies of scale or taking a fresh look at common problems.

(ii) Localism

Local housing and planning authorities should seek to embrace the localism agenda and enable greater involvement of local people in development. Open Source suggests planning by consensus and there is a real opportunity to involve the community in the planning process and help them to understand local housing need, demand and prospects for growth.

(iii) Every £ of public money needs to count

In the current climate, public sector finances are under intense pressure, and unlike some areas of public spending, neither housing nor regeneration is ring-fenced. Where public money is used in support of a project, those overseeing the project need to ask whether (a) public funds are appropriately leveraging private funds (and if so, are they leveraging sufficient private funds) and (b) where public money is being

deployed by way of grant, is there a mechanism to redeploy that money by way of a return-carrying investment.

(iv) Greater sharing of risk and reward between the public and private sectors

Traditionally, public sector bodies have tended to be fairly risk adverse. In order to deliver some of the new funding models outlined in this Strategy, a greater degree of innovation is required than has traditionally been the case for many authorities. This innovation could potentially expose the public sector to a greater degree of risk. As some of these recommendations are explored, time should be given to understanding the various levels of risk inherent in the new operating models, and to looking for means of mitigating risk. At the same time, public bodies should look to structure an appropriate level of return into their investments to compensate for risk.

(v) Greater use of public sector land and property assets

Many of the local authorities and public sector agencies for which this Strategy will be relevant will have land and property assets which could be redeployed successfully to deliver some of the outcomes required by the Strategy. Although much of that property portfolio will be known, some of those assets will be "hidden", either because they are too small to feature in asset registers or require assessment with a pair of fresh eyes. While the public sector is cash constrained, public sector land assets could have a very significant role to play in delivering this Strategy.

(vi) Greater flexibility of approach

Many of the recommendations in this Strategy would require a more flexible and innovative approach than has otherwise been the case. As already highlighted, this is not a one-size-fits-all strategy, and it will be for local housing and planning authorities and other public sector bodies to determine what is appropriate for their individual circumstances.

2.2 The themes and ambitions

In developing this Strategy we commissioned DTZ to undertake a Kent and Medway Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Through this, we identified 5 key housing themes that affect the Kent and Medway area. In shaping our ambitions for each theme we have used the 6 principles as our foundation.

Theme 1 – Managed Growth and Infrastructure

Our Ambition: *The continued delivery of key infrastructure to support managed growth and housing delivery across the County.*

Theme 2 – Place-making and Regeneration

Our Ambition: *The continued regeneration of our disadvantaged neighbourhoods to bring them in line with more affluent parts of the County.*

Theme 3 - Affordability and Choice

Our Ambition: *The provision of choice and affordability in housing for the citizens of Kent and Medway, including rural communities, which meets their needs and aspirations.*

Theme 4 - Housing Renewal

Our Ambition: *The managed improvement and retrofit of existing homes to make them fit for now and the future.*

Theme 5 - Housing Need

Our Ambition: *To support vulnerable people in housing need to fulfil their potential and live a high quality life through the provision of excellent housing and support services.*

3. What do we want government to do?

The successful delivery of our ambitions will require authorities across Kent and Medway to influence policy at a government level. The Strategy represents a key tool to influence and help shape government policy. Indeed, the Minister for Housing and Planning has already recognised the importance of the Strategy in championing the coalition agenda and welcomed it as part of the Government's ongoing consultation on the housing agenda.

In our consultation draft, we asked the Government for the introduction of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to help get growth moving again; to make funding available to finance regeneration and economic growth; to give more powers to enable the use local products; to support the funding of retrofit and enable authorities to set flexible local tariffs in the use of Community Infrastructure Levy.

The coalition government has recently announced a number of proposals that respond to these asks, including: the CSR announcement on TIF; the introduction of the Regional Growth Fund; the intentions within the Local Decisions consultation paper around setting local priorities and the use of "affordable rent" tenancies; the new Green Deal and the proposals on Community Infrastructure Levy.

Our key asks of government are:

1. Simplify the **regulatory framework** for development, to help get growth moving again.
2. Support and enable the delivery of the proposals within **Growth Without Gridlock: A Transport Delivery Plan for Kent**, to help deliver major regeneration across Kent.
3. Incentivise public agencies to make **public sector land** available for development purposes, providing local authorities with the **flexibility** to share more of the **risk** in order to reap better **rewards** upon completion.
4. Support people's **aspirations for home ownership** by offering variants on shared ownership models and finding new ways of financing a wider range of innovative mortgage products.
5. Encourage investors to invest in the **private rented sector** in the same way they currently do for other property asset classes.
6. Give local authorities **more powers** to be able to use **local products** that respond to local requirements, flex rents and make greater use of intermediate tenures.
7. Support the funding of **retrofit** and the development of wider solutions to improve existing homes.
8. Ensure that Kent and Medway do not suffer a **disproportionate rise in new housing benefit claimants** as an unintended consequence of proposed housing benefit reforms.

Setting the Scene

1. The Comprehensive Spending Review

The constraints on public sector spending announced in the coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010 will mean that achieving more for less is imperative for all public sector organisations.

There is a big challenge ahead to deliver quality development and growth in a world of diminishing resources. Authorities in Kent and Medway need to work together to determine how to bring the strands of limited resource together to deliver appropriate housing growth across the whole of the County.

The proposed changes announced in the CSR will have a huge impact on the future delivery of housing and housing services.

So far, there have been a series of headline proposals relating to housing and growth, but these are still in the initial stages of development. It would not be appropriate for the Strategy to take a position before all the details are known. Instead, we shall commit to refreshing this Strategy, when more clarity around the government's intentions has been provided.

In the interim, we shall seek to influence government as they work up their proposals, to ensure that what emerges is of benefit to Kent and Medway.

2. Changes in the planning regime

The government has also stated its intention to implement the commitment made in the Coalition Agreement to decentralise the planning system. The Secretary of State issued a letter in July 2010 to this effect and the legal basis for Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) will be abolished through the forthcoming *Localism and Decentralisation Bill*.

The abolition of RSSs will enable local housing and planning authorities in Kent and Medway to decide their own housing priorities, based on local need and ambition for growth, rather than having to meet centrally-imposed targets. There is now a real opportunity for authorities and communities to take control of local development and the delivery of managed growth.

3. Localism

The coalition government has made it clear that it wants to see people put back at the heart of decision-making.

All councils in Kent and Medway have been supportive of the localism agenda and a joined-up approach to delivering the services that citizens want. In 2007, the County and District Councils signed the Kent Commitment, which contained a commitment to work together to innovate and improve the quality of life of people in Kent.

“If you want people to feel connected to their communities. Proud of their communities. Then you give people a real say over what happens in their communities. And the power to make a difference.”

Rt. Hon Eric Pickles, MP

Kent and Medway authorities remain passionate about bringing decision-making and services closer to local people.

There is now an opportunity to really involve local people in determining local growth and ambition and ensuring that local need and aspiration are catered for.

4. Wider growth context

4.1. Local Investment Plans

Across Kent and Medway, local housing and planning authorities have developed in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency four Local Investment Plans (LIPs) which set out local priorities for infrastructure to support economic and housing growth.

The Kent and Medway SMHA has been used as part of the evidence base to inform the development of the LIPs and in the future the LIPs will be key vehicles in the delivery of the aspirations that are set out in the Strategy.

4.2 Local Enterprise Partnerships

The relationship between housing, economic development and regeneration is fundamental to the success of this strategy. Nationally, the economic development landscape is changing with the proposed

abolition of Regional Development Agencies and their replacement by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

This Strategy will inform the work of the Kent, Greater Essex and East Sussex LEP as it is established.

4.3. How does this Strategy link in with wider growth objectives?

Housing is a key contributor to wider growth and regeneration objectives across Kent and Medway.

The right housing in the right place can help to drive economic growth and provide for the needs of a growing workforce.

New housing is a critical component of integrated regeneration schemes. As well as providing homes for people to live in, there are wider economic and social benefits.

Successful regeneration should also include investment in our existing communities to ensure its benefits have the widest possible impact. This Strategy seeks to respond to the challenges posed by the economic downturn and the need to regenerate the most disadvantaged areas of Kent and Medway.

It also seeks to exploit the opportunities presented by Kent and Medway's unique position as the UK's front door. The international rail link provides connection to mainland Europe, with international stations at Ashford and Ebbsfleet. It has the UK's first high speed domestic rail service, which has transformed travel times and integrated relatively isolated areas with regional and metropolitan economies. For example, Folkestone is now within an hour of London.

Housing also needs to be seen in the wider context of the social and economic fabric of our communities, including aspects such as the cultural offer. For example, creating an environment in which creative practitioners want to live, work and relocate to can bring economic and social benefits to regeneration areas.

4.4. How does this Strategy link with other regeneration and development strategies?

This Strategy builds on 21st Century Kent and supports the *Vision for Kent*, *Medway Sustainable Community Strategy*, the District-level sustainable community strategies in Kent, as well as the local housing strategies and the Local Investment Plans.

There are also close links between this Strategy and community budgeting, a government initiative that seeks to analyse the total value of public investment going into an area with a view to developing proposals to both improve services and reduce expenditure.

In particular, the Strategy is one of several that support *Unlocking Kent's Potential*, KCC's Framework for Regeneration. This sets out an overarching assessment of the key opportunities and challenges facing the County over the coming years. It takes an integrated approach to regeneration, emphasising the links between economic growth, improved skills levels, better quality housing, effective transport infrastructure and the need to adapt to the changing demands of our growing population.



Theme 1: Managed Growth and Infrastructure

Our Ambition: *The continued delivery of key infrastructure to support managed growth and housing delivery across the County.*

I. Context

Authorities are keen to ensure that development and managed growth in Kent and Medway gets moving again.

Due to the recession, many sites have stalled as lower public sector funding and developer contributions impact on the level of infrastructure works that can unlock sites. The public and private sectors need to consider how they can work together to support economic growth, through the collective use of and disposal of public land assets, and to secure investment.

Infrastructure is vital for achieving managed growth and for ensuring the delivery of housing. In a world of reducing capital to fund infrastructure, this will need to be planned in a much more collaborative way between County, Districts, Boroughs and Medway.

The recession has had various impacts on the housing sector and led to:

- A fall in the value of residential property
- A tightening of lending criteria for mortgage finance leading to significantly constricted supply and a reduction in the number of first time buyers able to access the market

- A large number of redundancies in the house building and associated sectors
- Lack of job security affecting people's confidence in the market and desire to move home

It is widely recognised that relatively easy access to mortgage finance was a driver for the growth in the housing market and rise in house prices. The restriction in mortgage availability due to the Credit Crunch was the first major impact on the housing market and created the initial impact on the number of new homes that were being sold by the national house builders. The reaction of some of the major house builders was stark; most notably Persimmon announced a complete cessation of new house building across all its sites.

The subsequent issues are well documented and so are not repeated here. However, the key consequences can be summarised as:

- The impact of the fall in house prices on the viability of certain schemes
- The need to renegotiate many of the planning commitments (section 106 and other conditions) made by developers as these can no longer be supported by the scheme
- A reduction in the capacity in the house building sector

These factors led to the 'old model' of delivering infrastructure and affordable housing no longer being sustainable in the current climate. However, market conditions vary across the County and s.106 will remain an important source of investment alongside new innovative models.

There is some evidence that conditions are easing, but recent growth in house prices has only been in certain locations. CB Richard Ellis (CBRE) predict that it is unlikely that house prices will reach their 2007 peak again until 2016.

As noted above, one of the impacts of the Credit Crunch and recession is a significant reduction in the number of new homes being completed and the impact this has on the delivery of affordable homes. Whilst the Government has made available additional funding to assist with maintaining delivery of new housing, the total number of new homes delivered has been falling and the public sector has had a growing reliance on the private sector for the supply of new affordable homes (through s.106 agreements). This is shown in Figure 1.

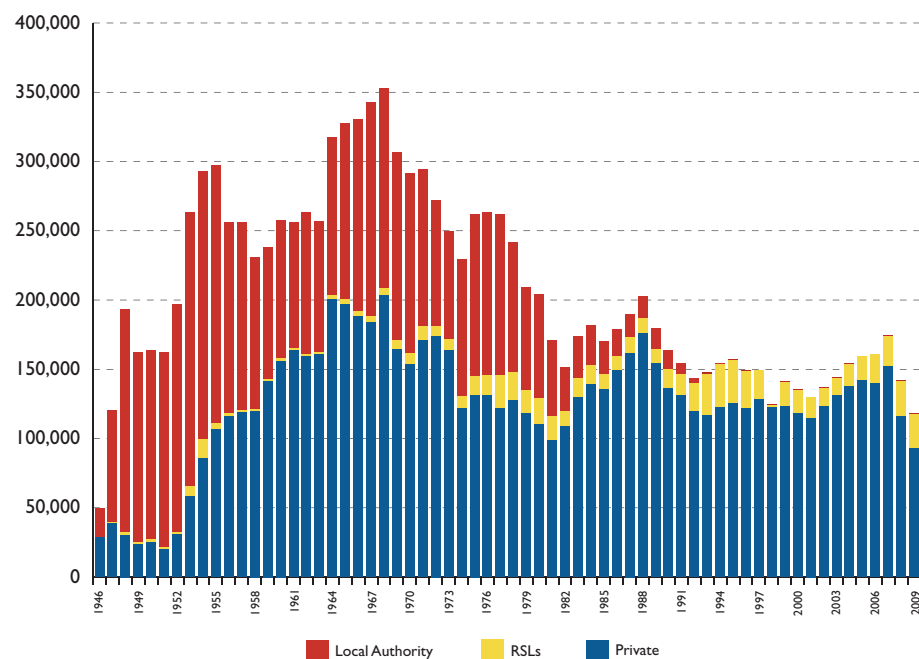


Figure 1 – Total Housing Supply

In light of the data shown in *Figure 1* the public sector is faced with two choices: to wait for property market values to return or to act proactively to try to facilitate delivery of new homes.

To support the proposition of a proactive approach, the 2009 Report *Building Better Lives* recognised the importance of local authorities having strategic housing policies; not with a planning focus but to provide a clear route to delivery.

Some of the report's key recommendations relevant to stimulating the supply and choice of new homes include:

- the creation of effective housing partnerships between district and county councils
- the use of well-being powers to assist in achieving strategic housing objectives
- to continuously review land and property holdings (at district, county and unitary levels) to identify opportunities to release land for new market or affordable housing
- to review and develop joint working arrangements between councils, especially among neighbouring districts, and between councils and Housing Associations, in order to enhance the strategic housing capacity
- to seize opportunities presented by the recession that offer the best prospect of achieving strategic housing objectives and good value for money

1.1 The Key Challenge

Even with the government's proposed abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the scale of the issue is substantial. Under the previous South East Plan requirement for 140,000 new homes in Kent and

Medway by 2026, land, construction costs, finance and profit would have require a total pool of funding to be secured of around £30 billion in today's money.

This section seeks to address 3 key questions:

1. How can we use the planning system to deliver the right homes?

This includes:

- Housing growth without the Regional Spatial Strategy and planning infrastructure
- Localism

2. How can we stimulate demand led supply of market homes?

This includes:

- Funding infrastructure and options for facilitating the release of strategic land
- Where appropriate, to assist with funding remediation and facilitating land assembly
- Land supply

3. How can we stimulate the supply of affordable homes?

This includes:

- Different forms of delivery model that could be considered both through collaboration to create a Kent and Medway delivery approach and;
- At a local level to create new supply of affordable homes to address local market circumstances.

2. Planning for managed growth

The proposed abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) represents an opportunity for local housing and planning authorities in Kent and Medway to locally determine their own housing growth and infrastructure requirements. Rather than being forced to deliver top-down centrally imposed targets, housing numbers can be derived from the bottom-up, based on local need and aspiration.

Through localism, local housing and planning authorities will be able to involve local people in developing their ambitions for local growth and put local communities in the driving seat.

There is also an opportunity to ensure that there is a clear Kent and Medway appreciation of overall housing growth, developed in a bottom-up approach from locally-determined requirements. With a future reduction in capital for infrastructure, housing growth needs to be understood across the County, to ensure that the right infrastructure can be put in place to help deliver it.

Working collectively will also help to ensure Kent and Medway authorities attract the right level of investment and give confidence to developers and government that Kent is open for business.

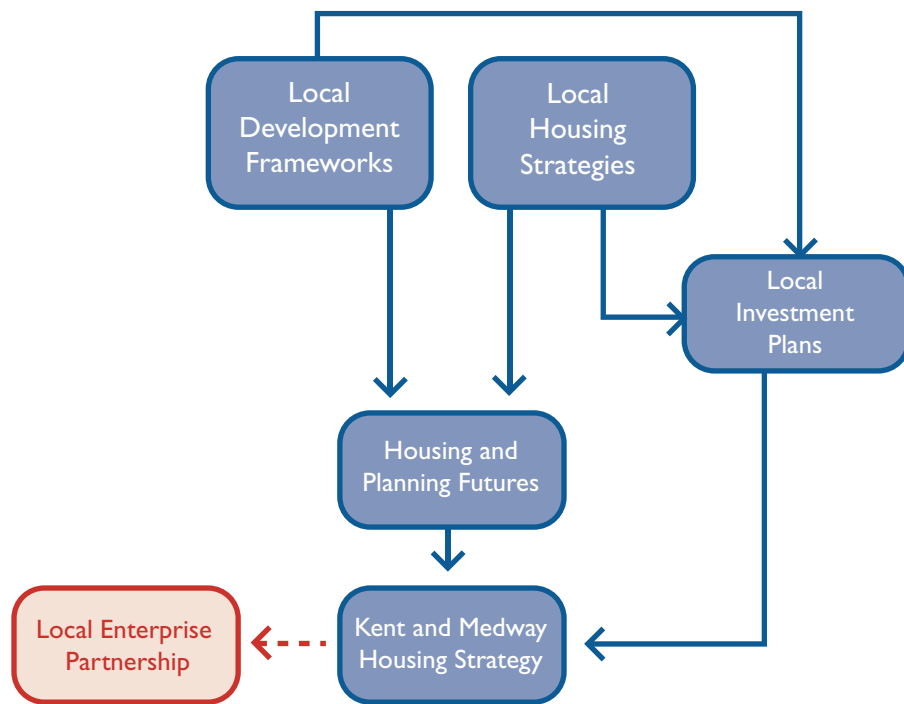


Figure 2 – Structure for determining a single Kent & Medway growth ambition

To enable this, authorities' locally-determined planning and housing requirements can be brought together in a single housing growth and infrastructure ambition for Kent and Medway, based on individual housing and planning authorities priorities for local growth.

It is proposed that this is carried out by *Housing and Planning Futures*, a group which will bring Leaders together to provide strategic co-ordination of housing growth across Kent and Medway. The group would be supported by a shadow group comprising members of Kent Housing Group, Kent Planning Officers Group, Kent Developers Group,

Homes and Communities Agency and Kent Highways and will link in with the Ambition Boards of the Kent Forum.

Housing and Planning Futures will work with local housing and planning authorities in Kent and Medway to bring together individual housing and development requirements, including the priorities determined by the Local Investment Plans. These can be drawn together in a bottom-up approach to record the local growth ambitions across Kent and Medway and describe the infrastructure and resource requirements to meet these ambitions.

The outcomes of this will inform the refresh of this Strategy. We anticipate that in the future the Strategy will inform the Kent, Greater Essex and East Sussex LEP (see Figure 2), ensuring that housing, infrastructure and economic growth are aligned.

RECOMMENDATION: the establishment of Housing and Planning Futures where the Leaders bring together locally determined requirements for housing growth and infrastructure into a single ambition for Kent and Medway.

3. Infrastructure

3.1 Planning for infrastructure

Infrastructure is vital for achieving managed growth, supporting employment, ensuring housing delivery and creating communities. Housing provision is compromised without adequate utility supplies, schools and transport links.

Infrastructure does not begin nor end at District or Borough boundaries. It needs to be co-ordinated across the larger County, or in

some instances cross-County areas, to ensure that resources are being adequately targeted to meet the needs of as many neighbourhoods as possible.

With the proposed abolition of the RSS, infrastructure provision will need to be planned in a much more collaborative way between County, Districts, Boroughs and Medway with local housing and planning authorities' LDFs informing the Kent and Medway infrastructure requirements. In challenging economic times, this process should aim to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and accelerate growth in priority areas, whilst ensuring the viability of existing economically successful parts of the County.

Infrastructure must also be planned pragmatically with the private sector, working up new and innovative ways of funding essentially needed infrastructure investment, thereby ensuring the demands placed upon developers are sensible and development remains viable.



Land Securities

3.2 Funding infrastructure

Capital funding for infrastructure is expected to come under particular pressure as the government seeks to reduce the UK's budget deficit, meaning that we cannot continue to rely on existing funding streams. This will require us to take a pragmatic approach to implementation and bold and innovative steps to identify possible alternative sources of funding for community infrastructure.

Authorities in Kent and Medway have been keen to promote and influence the ongoing discussion with government about the benefits to be gained from the introduction of a form of Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

In May 2009 the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), invited all local authorities to submit proposals for consideration by the then government as potential pilot schemes to assess the potential impact for the introduction of TIF. Over 80 local authorities submitted proposals for in excess of 100 schemes. Subsequently CLG requested further information in the form of 'Case Studies' in order to understand better the financial, legal and economic issues associated with strategic development projects where significant upfront infrastructure investment was required.

These Case Studies comprised over 30 questions covering issues including:

- Information about the proposed development scheme and its financial viability.
- The economic outputs that will be generated from the proposal in order to assess the Gross Value Added.
- The assessment of potential direct and indirect tax arising from the proposal.

- Issues of risk sharing between the private and public sectors.
- Options for raising the finance for the infrastructure investment including the use of TIF.

The Government White Paper: *Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential* sets out a number of questions in connection with TIF and a wider consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of local retention of all business rates, as part of a mixture of proposed new funding streams (including the proposed New Homes Bonus and Business Increase Bonus). It is understood that legislation to introduce TIF is to be brought forward in summer 2011.

3.3 How does TIF work?

Tax Increment Finance (TIF) works by a local authority being able to retain a proportion of the additional business rates that are generated through the commercial development arising from the scheme. In addition to the business rates this can also include Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) and potentially (in theory) other directly related tax. However, most modelling is undertaken using initially a proportion of the incremental Business Rate and in some cases the SDLT. The TIF is purely therefore the additional business rates that are truly generated as a consequence of the new development i.e. net of any existing rates derived from the site prior to development. A key test known as the 'but for test' has to be met in that it needs to be unequivocally demonstrated that 'but for' TIF the development and consequential business rates and other indirect taxes would not arise.

The basic TIF model is shown in Figure 3:

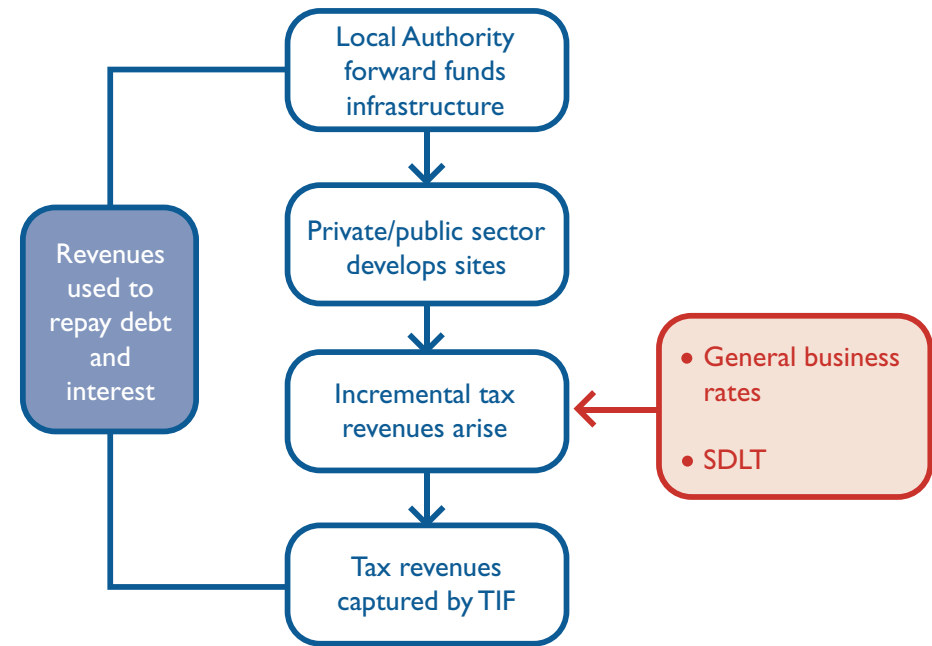


Figure 3: Basic TIF model

There are number of development schemes across Kent and Medway where a TIF would unlock the economic development potential of the site. Case studies in respect of Ebbsfleet Valley, Dover Waterfront and Town Centre Regeneration, EuroKent Town Centre Regeneration Thanet and Eureka Park Ashford were submitted to CLG last year.

There is also the opportunity for some local authorities to consider the use of their funds to invest in structures that not only create an acceptable financial return but also benefit sub regions. Such a proposal could be linked to potential future bids for the proposed Regional Growth Funds (as match funding) and could be structured in such a way that would be 'revolving', thereby evolving returns to be reinvested into

another pre-agreed project within the sub region. This was recognised in the White Paper.

RECOMMENDATION: Promote and engage with government proposals for the introduction of Tax Increment Financing and other innovative forms of infrastructure funding and support pilot projects in Kent and Medway.

4. Reducing the burden on developers

It has become increasingly clear that the cost of housing construction in the UK is added to significantly by compliance and regulation placed upon the construction industry. Initial estimates indicate that this may increase the cost per house by up to 25%.

The coalition government has already recognised this issue, pledging to overhaul existing complicated building regulations and scrapping the introduction of new building standards that were due to be imposed on developers using public funding or building on public land.

Working with several major international construction companies, Kent County Council is compiling evidence to define unnecessary or excessive compliance costs associated with delivering new construction projects and to make a compelling case for change. Areas to be investigated will include specifications, planning, procurement and standardisation, together with the more direct burdens of employment and other legislation.

This evidence will be shared with Ministers to ensure the system is changed so that new investment goes into development and not excessive compliance.



5. Delivering managed growth

Even in the peak of the market, devising strategies to deliver managed growth in disadvantaged areas could prove challenging. In the post recession era, successful strategies require a thorough understanding of the different forms and application of development agreements between the private and public sectors. It is also now necessary to reassess the apportionment of risk between the two sectors and to be aware of areas where the public sector can add value in facilitating delivery of what are – by definition – challenging projects.

Historically, the public sector has generally opted for a relatively straight forward form when disposing of its assets, in some cases even using an informal tender process. The reason for this was invariably that market conditions were strong and therefore local authorities could usually be assured of achieving upfront capital receipts and often also secure contractual commitments from developers to develop sites in accordance with agreed specifications and development programmes.

Since the Credit Crunch, authorities cannot automatically deal with the disposal of their assets in the same way. Indeed, it could be argued that to do so may not achieve best value and compliance with their statutory obligations under S123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Part of the solution to this issue is gaining a better understanding of the nature of different forms of development agreement, when they would be suitable to use, and the potential risk and returns that go with each. Whilst specific legal advice will be required for each situation, a local authority's "well being powers" are broadly drawn and could support many innovative potential solutions.

A summary of the range of delivery structures available to local authorities to consider is illustrated in Figure 4:

Development - Risk/Reward

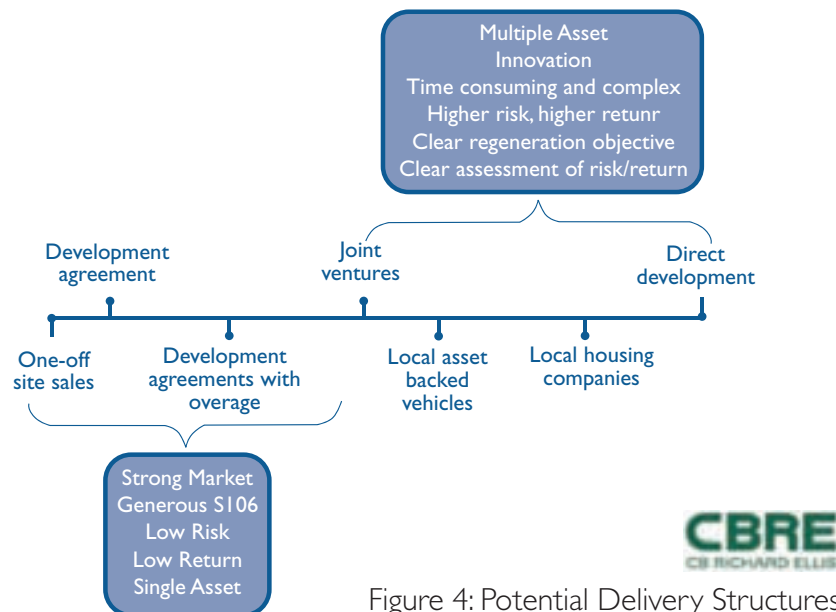


Figure 4: Potential Delivery Structures

5.1 Solutions for a strong market generally offering low risk, lower return and often relating to a single asset

5.1.1 One off site sales

Individual site sales are often seen as a popular way in which capital can be realised by local authorities. Local authorities have often thought that by offering an individual site or property through an informal tender, this would demonstrably achieve best value for the site by way of a capital receipt paid on completion of the sale contract. When the market was stronger this approach was often quite successful for well located, attractive sites due to the competition between developers and importantly the relatively easy availability of finance.

In the current climate this approach is unlikely to be successful. Additionally, in order to support a regeneration project the local authority would then itself need to agree to invest (or ring fence) the proceeds to assist with delivery of a later phase. The cost of finance (if it can be secured) is now also higher even though the Bank of England base rate is at a historically low level. Therefore, requiring an upfront capital payment for the land means the amount that a developer could pay is further reduced due to the finance cost of funding the upfront payment.

When should this approach be considered?

For sites and properties where there is no adjacent regeneration proposals, i.e. where the sale of the site itself is the sole objective.

Even then careful consideration needs to be given to assessing whether a materially greater capital receipt could be achieved through recognising some of the development and finance risks; an example would be requesting a deferred and/or phased land payment profile. It is often difficult with this simple structure to agree any meaningful form of overage with the purchaser, so again where values could be enhanced

through implementation of a regeneration strategy, this would not show the best return for the public sector.

5.1.2 Development Agreements including those with overage

These agreements can take numerous forms but generally have been applied to more complicated development proposals often where a local authority needs a greater degree of control over the site development proposals. They are commonly used for town centre developments or larger, phased residential developments including urban extensions.

They can be structured with or without overage (or participation) and generally include a deferred transfer of land upon performance of development obligations by the chosen development partner. In structure they are relatively straight forward and compared with the later examples below do not really enable the local authority to share in the success of a development proposal, other than through an overage or participation provision. Trying to secure financial returns from this type of provision is notoriously difficult; in many instances the calculations undertaken are opaque and rely heavily upon the good faith of the development partner to provide clear and accurate cost analysis. Under these forms of agreement a developer would normally be entitled to a priority profit return before any surplus proceeds were calculated.

When should this approach be considered?

There is still a place for authorities to consider using this type of agreement. The deciding factors would include:

- Whether the local authority is looking to try to transfer all risk to the development partner as opposed to agreeing to take some risk itself, for example around third party land acquisition.

- Where the public sector does not want to apply staff resources to assist with bringing forward a scheme proposal.
- The quantum of land owned by the local authority; these agreements are often used where there is a limited land ownership.
- Whether public sector facilities are part of the consideration. These agreements may not secure the optimum share of the return for the local authority if its covenant is to be used by the developer under a proposed lease back arrangement of new public facilities.

5.2 Multiple asset solutions, more innovative, higher risk but also offering higher returns

5.2.1 Joint Ventures

With this structure the local authority would usually agree to contribute land into the joint venture (JV) either in lieu of a defined return at a trigger event in the future or in lieu of an agreed percentage share of the surplus development proceeds. The JV partner would also have land to contribute or would agree to contribute equity and/or specialist development resourcing and expertise to help realise the proposed development. Financial returns at one end of the scale can include fixed minimum amounts for land or can be entirely at risk and relate to an agreed share of surpluses.

An audited development account would be set up and all costs and revenues would be contained within it to ensure transparency. If the development partner is bringing significant expertise to the project (rather than investing similar areas of land), the structure would include a priority payment of an agreed development management fee.

It is worth noting that with joint ventures and other forms of special purpose vehicle referred to below, whilst these contain a higher risk profile that clearly needs to be understood, they also contain the

potential for greater reward. It is often overlooked that risk has a cost attached to it which the private sector will price for if it is passed to them. Therefore understanding those risks and processes that the public sector is willing to agree to is an important early piece of analysis for structures of this nature.

When should this approach be considered?

These are more likely to be appropriate to consider in the following circumstances:

- Where there could be a true growth of values through the 'regeneration effect' of the proposed scheme. An example of this would be for a catalytic or transformational development project.
- Where the project viability cannot support the sharing of costs usually found under a development agreement.
- Where there is the need to secure either a developer's resourcing to progress a project or his specialist expertise. In this circumstance, the partner may be incentivised through the JV structure to optimise the value of the development parcels created say on a large urban extension rather than looking to receive a development profit through direct development.
- Where a form of Special Purpose Vehicle is proposed through which the local authority may by use of its covenant raise development finance.

5.2.2 Local asset backed vehicles

These are forms of joint venture and in some ways are better referred to as such so that they do not appear overcomplicated.

These are often corporate structures (for example a limited liability partnership) and would be set up to address development across multiple projects and are therefore suited to mixed-use development.

Land would be transferred into the vehicles on satisfaction of defined conditions. The partner(s) in the vehicle would contribute agreed equity and the vehicle itself would then raise capital to deliver the projects identified in its Business Plan.

The circumstances of each project would need to be considered in recommending a suitable structure; however, a potential structure is illustrated in Figure 5 below.

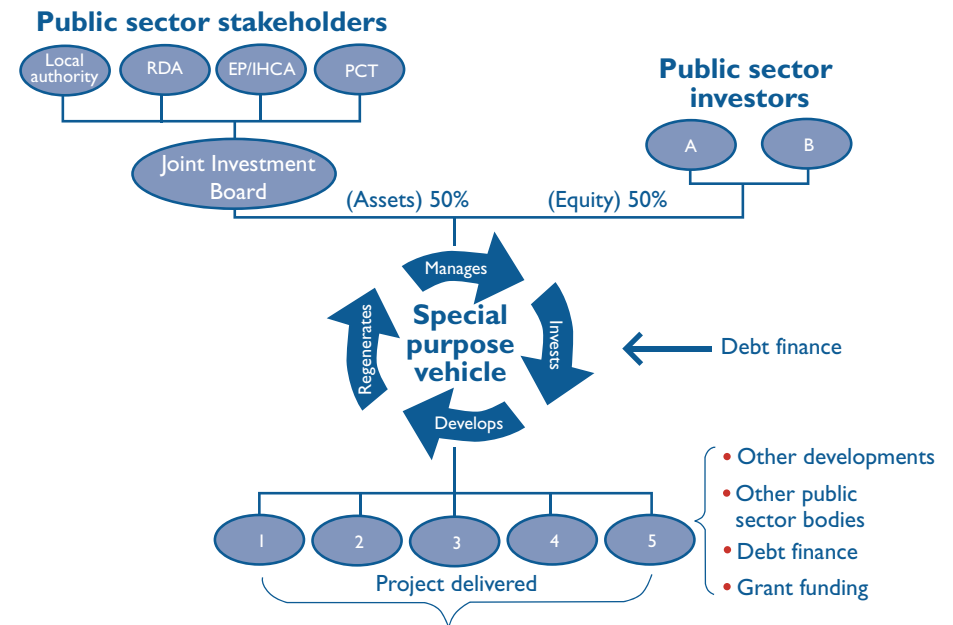


Figure 5: Potential structure for local asset backed vehicles

When should this approach be considered?

These structures are suitable for multiple projects where the delivery partner is not necessarily going to be the developer of the identified sites or projects.

The inevitable costs associated with setting up the vehicle and procuring a delivery partner mean that these vehicles are ideal for longer term projects (10 – 15 years) and enable other forms of development structure to be applied to specific projects.

They are very suitable for regeneration projects where the local authority wants to take a truly longer term view and may want to participate either through taking a lease of public assets or through helping to fund certain aspects for example the public infrastructure. As with any more complex delivery model, the business case and value for money assessment need careful consideration to ensure the public bodies' duties and obligations are met.

RECOMMENDATION: Public sector organisations create development strategies and enter into agreements with the private sector that exploit the opportunity to share risk and reward to stimulate delivery.

Case Study I – The Bridge, Dartford

The Bridge is a 264 acre mixed-use project that is being developed as a joint venture partnership between Dartford Borough Council and ProLogis to bring to life the Council's vision for the rebirth of North Dartford.

The scheme will provide up to 1500 homes, with 30% being affordable housing. The site includes community and leisure facilities, commercial accommodation, more than 80 acres of public open space and a new 'Fastrack' transport system.

The development has a variety of housing types and styles, quality public spaces, community pocket parks and a real sense of place. Homes and the landscape are arranged in a way that encourages people to get to know each other and for children to play safely. All homes have been designed to be five minutes from the central amenities and sports and play areas. All residents are supplied with free travel on Fastrack route A and have screens in their homes providing real time arrival information of the buses.

A community hub was opened in 2009 which includes a school. There is a Business and Innovation Centre and large scale employers such as Sainsbury are creating a substantial number of jobs.



6. Planning to release the delivery of public land

Much of the focus of this and other housing strategies is on large strategic sites that will have a significant impact on housing supply. It is usually for such sites that a housing delivery vehicle is considered suitable, due to the number of homes it would generate, to justify its cost of:

- Establishment
- Procurement
- Ongoing resource implications

However, an opportunity exists for true collaboration across Kent and Medway that would combine the benefit of a single establishment and procurement cost but enable authorities to take a 'portfolio approach' to smaller sites within their control that individually would be too small to justify the cost of setting up such a vehicle, but in aggregate could amount to a sizable number of homes.

A number of local authorities have undertaken feasibility studies to look at the potential to use value that could be created from small parcels of land to help fund and facilitate delivery of regeneration projects. These "Hidden Homes" studies are undertaken using rigorous criteria to establish whether land could either be used better for provision of homes – through minor redevelopment or amalgamation of adjacent interests, or where land is vacant and could offer the potential for limited scale development of new homes. A recent review undertaken by CBRE of Brighton and Hove City Council's housing portfolio identified potential sites for around 800 new homes, some of which could be delivered in the short term with others requiring a medium term strategy to realise. Whilst Brighton and Hove is a large unitary, other smaller studies undertaken for local authorities have identified

new opportunities through a similar application of rigorous assessment criteria.

If each of the 14 authorities across Kent and Medway was able to identify 100 units this would achieve a sizable total output. It is recognised that some authorities may have more potential opportunities than others and some, such as Ashford, Canterbury, Gravesham and Thanet, have already undertaken a similar exercise as part of their bids for funding for the HCA programme previously known as Local Authority New Build (now incorporated within HCA's affordable housing programme).

Case Study 2 – Ashford Land Assessment

Ashford Borough Council commissioned DHA Planning to undertake a comprehensive study of all their land holdings in a systematic way. The work assessed how they could better manage their assets, from planning permissions for built development on some sites through to disposals of landholdings to produce revenue or reduce maintenance costs.

Each site owned by Ashford Borough Council was considered in detail and given an assessment of its potential for viable development, as well as considering what constraints might exist to hinder development.

Ashford Borough Council has been able to proactively use this detailed information to prioritise how sites can be taken forward and how the assets can be used more effectively and efficiently. Some of the sites identified for development have been through the planning stage and are now delivering new affordable housing using HCA funding.

6.1 How could it work?

The concept for the delivery vehicle is to facilitate and accelerate the delivery of new homes on public sector controlled land. There are different potential structures but one such proposal is that the delivery vehicle agrees to acquire land from a local authority offering a site that meets minimum criteria, in lieu of a share or deferred return in the profitability in delivering the development. In this way the individual local authority nominating land for consideration by the delivery vehicle gains the following benefits:

- The economies of scale that will have been driven through the collective procurement strength of the vehicle.
- Delivery of new homes (not just affordable) that meet local needs and targets.
- The potential to share in greater leverage of any other public funding (potentially through the Homes and Communities Agency and the proposed New Homes Bonus) that may be attracted by the creation of the vehicle but that would not otherwise be available for the individual sites.
- A deferred return either as a fixed sum or as a share in returns of the vehicle at the agreed point of distribution of proceeds.

Figure 6 illustrates the way in which the vehicle could be structured.

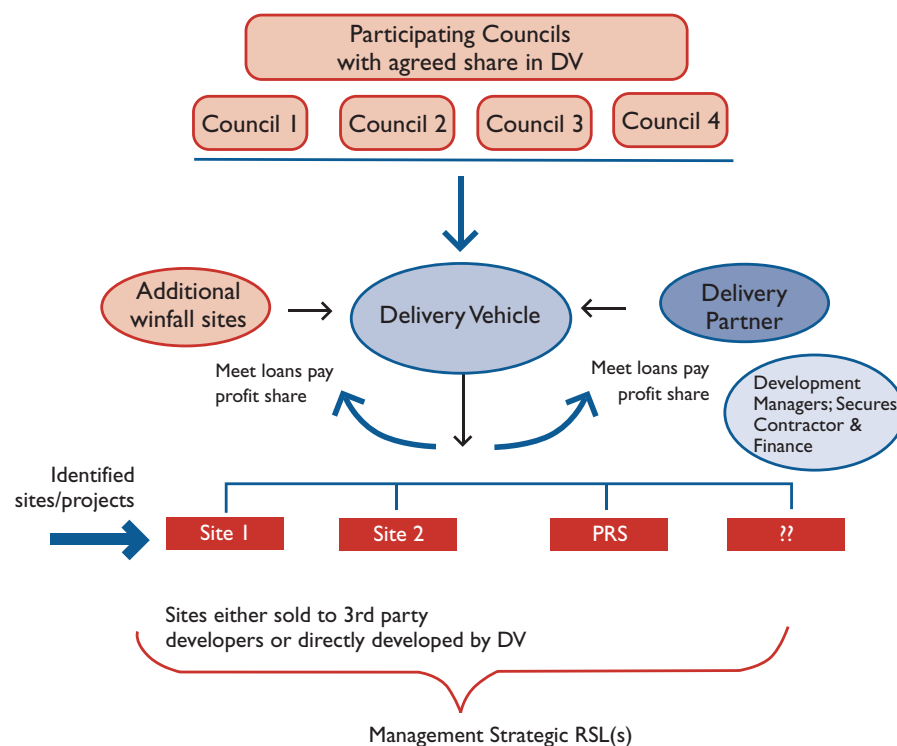


Figure 6: Potential Structure

It is important to note that the vehicle would not simply deliver new affordable housing but some of the other recommendations could easily and very effectively sit within such a structure thereby making it more attractive from a contractor, developer and finance perspective. Due to the potential economies of scale, it is envisaged that the vehicle would benefit from reduced levels of unit cost for each new home developed which in turn would benefit the contributing authorities. While this illustration is a model whereby the delivery vehicle acquires and

develops “pooled land” from local authorities choosing to participate, a model could also be developed whereby the vehicle has a contracting role with participating local authorities retaining the completed affordable housing asset. This structure would be similar to the programme formerly called Local Authority New Build (now incorporated within HCA’s affordable housing programme) but with the benefits of the economies of scale the vehicle could deliver.

The programme formerly called Local Authority New Build also provides an opportunity to stimulate the supply of new affordable homes. The programme uses a combination of grant and local authorities’ own resources to enable new local authority housing to be built. Any money used by local authorities from their budgets can be serviced by rental income from new council housing.

The recent consultation proposal by the Government for new Affordable Rents together with the proposal in the consultation paper: *Local Decisions: A fairer future for social housing* also suggests the potential for greater use of private rented properties to meet housing need, or make the above model more viable to deliver.

RECOMMENDATION: Undertake a pilot Hidden Homes assessment with partner authorities in Kent and Medway to identify public sector land opportunities and the potential to deliver new homes. Use this to work up a delivery approach to support Local Investment Plan priorities in conjunction with the HCA.



Moat

Theme 2: Place-making and Regeneration

Our Ambition: *The continued regeneration of our disadvantaged neighbourhoods to bring them in line with more affluent parts of the County.*

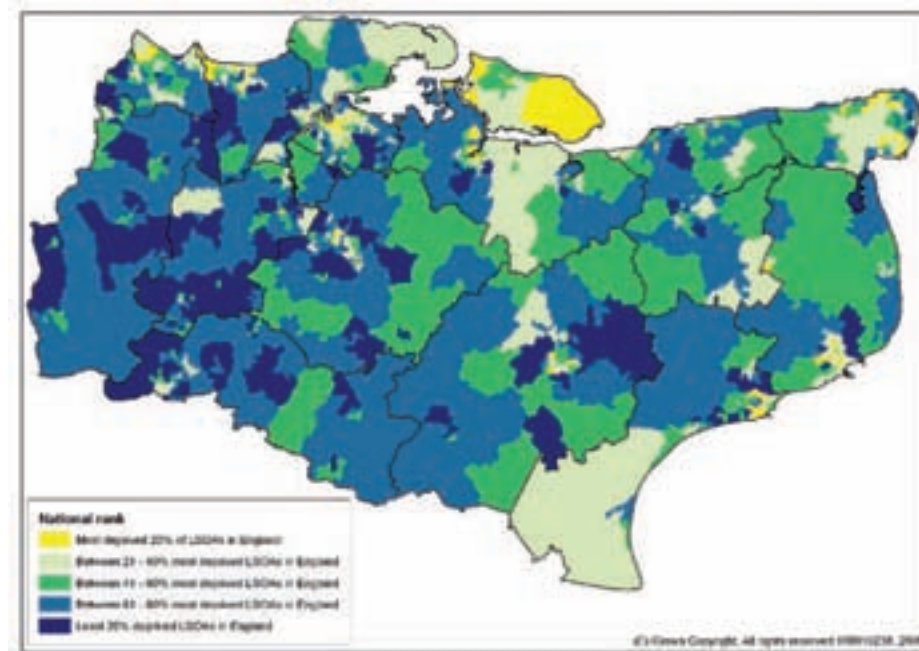
I. Context

Despite significant infrastructure investment in recent years, Kent and Medway continue to lag behind the rest of the South East in many economic indicators.

Incorporating communities on the edge of London, isolated rural settlements, coastal towns and major urban centres, Kent, including Medway, is highly diverse.

This diversity is visible in social and economic indicators and Kent and Medway averages mask considerable divergences in wealth, educational attainment, access to services and life chances across districts and boroughs.

Figure 7 illustrates disadvantage at local level, as measured by the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation. While the overall picture shows generally higher levels of disadvantage in the east of the county, it also shows there are localised concentrations of disadvantage throughout Kent and Medway, in both urban and rural areas.



Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007; KCC Research & Intelligence

Figure 7: Disadvantage in Kent and Medway using national comparisons

While Kent and Medway face major issues over the coming years, the area has major opportunities for regeneration and development.

Close proximity to one of the world's largest commercial and cultural centres means easy access to employment opportunities in London, especially for residents of North and West Kent, and it also provides access to London markets for Kent businesses. As a gateway to mainland Europe, with Europe's largest passenger port at Dover, Kent is also well placed as a business location.

These locational advantages are assisted by excellent rail connections to the Continent, and have been further enhanced with the opening of High Speed 1. The expansion of Manston and Lydd airports also presents opportunities to improve the area's connections with the rest of the world.

Kent and Medway already contain some of the country's largest regeneration initiatives, combining housing and employment growth. These include Thames Gateway, Kent Thameside and Ashford.

Whilst meeting regeneration objectives, we also need to ensure we continue to support high-performing areas within the Kent and Medway economy, where housing has been delivered and ensure that this is fostered for the future.

A key part of regeneration is giving areas a sense of place and community. Well-designed, well-built homes that fit in with the surrounding area help to give a place a single identity.

The natural and historic environments surrounding our homes are also important in helping to give a sense of place and identity to our communities.

Quality plays a major role in ensuring the regeneration of our disadvantaged areas. The quality of the homes we live in is not only important aesthetically but can greatly impact on our well-being. Poor quality housing can cause health problems for occupiers and dramatically lower life expectancy.

Economic difficulties faced by the public and private sectors alike have prompted short term imperatives in the quality of new design, cutting corners to meet viability or to secure activity.



The price for creating substandard places is that the housing will have a much shorter lifespan than it should and not offer the quality of life that communities should expect. Poor housing will also hinder investment.

Case Study 3 – Margate Housing Intervention

Margate has an impressive heritage of fine buildings and a stunning seaside location. Yet at the heart of the town are communities that are amongst the most disadvantaged in the country.

Margate Central and Cliftonville West are two wards now dominated by privately rented property. Once grand, large family houses close to the seafront have been subdivided into multiple flats, which are mostly let to people on Housing Benefit. Many of these properties are in poor physical condition, offering a very low standard of accommodation to tenants.

Through taking tough, direct action and using a range of interventions, Thanet District Council, Kent County Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Margate Taskforce are working together to drive up the standard of accommodation within these two wards, reduce the high concentration of disadvantaged people living in such a small area, encourage investment back into the area and ultimately re-balance the mix of tenure between rental and owner-occupier homes.

The model for delivering change could have widespread relevance to other towns in Kent with large amounts of older, private rented sector homes; and to coastal towns around the country.



2. Creating balanced communities

A thriving, well-balanced, happy community is a place where people want to live and work both now and in the future. In recognition of this, Kent Housing Group has developed a Sustainable Communities Protocol, which highlights and encourages the importance of creating such communities in Kent and Medway.

“Our responsibility is to make our communities work well. We must ensure that everyone feels included and valued and can willingly accept their responsibilities and contribute to making their communities a safer and better place. Ultimately it is the building of self-generating capacity and responsibility from within communities that will create places with a sense of belonging and neighbourhoods that are friendly, safe and attractive”

Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart

The Protocol’s core purpose is to ensure that future housing developments within Kent meet the objective of creating long-lasting balanced communities. It contains guidance applicable to developments of all sizes, including those that sit alongside communities containing existing affordable housing.

Case Study 4 – Old Cannon Wharf, Tonbridge

Tonbridge & Malling have worked with Orbit South to implement the Sustainable Communities Protocol at the Old Cannon Wharf development in Tonbridge Town Centre.

Completed in early 2010, 70 of the flats are affordable. The scheme is in a central location with easy access to buses, main line trains and local shops, and contains 29 flats for social rent, 10 flats for intermediate rent, and 31 for shared ownership.



The Council and Orbit South wished to work together on a lettings plan that operated in harmony with Kent Homechoice to create a sustainable long lasting community. The purpose of the lettings plan is to balance the following factors:

- A preferred age range of tenants, specified to provide a mixed ratio throughout the development
- A preferred age range of children, based on Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's allocation policy in relation to bedroom occupancy
- A preference to applicants who are economically active

All tenants are placed on a Starter Tenancy for a minimum 12-month period, and expected to sign up to the Good Neighbour Agreement. The lettings plan is reviewed by Orbit South and the Council on an annual basis, in consultation with residents.

The Protocol seeks to promote the development of balanced communities - i.e. communities with a mix of tenure, income levels and household types, supported through appropriate infrastructure and community development initiatives and resources. The setting up of local lettings plans (see *Case Study 4*) on new developments is now widely promoted as a means of ensuring longer term balanced communities.

3. Building a new generation of high quality homes

Homes should be built with good design principles in mind and be attractive, functional and enduring (see *Figure 8*).

1. **Achieving pride of place** – making understandable, safe, pleasant and welcoming places; public spaces that provide enclosure, but are not gated or exclusive enclaves, open to all but where privacy is offered and respected. Where there are private outdoor areas (gardens and balconies) but also shared spaces such as squares, parks, gardens, playspaces, seating, providing shade, sunshine and shelter.
2. **Places that are distinctive** – with their own character, yet also belonging to their surroundings.
3. **Well connected places** easy to reach from the neighbouring town or village straightforward to navigate
4. **A mix of uses and tenures** that can foster a diverse and lively community, with scope for growth or change
5. **Enduring and flexible places** - well built, with good space standards inside and out, environmentally efficient and adaptable

Figure 8 – The principles of good design

Housing quality audits conducted on behalf of CABI have highlighted the low quality of much housing built in recent years and identified a number of common problems:

- Poor internal space standards
- Lack of identity – a sameness resulting from a standardised product from national housebuilders, with routine designs of houses and flats on standard layouts, applied with scant regard to the lie of the land or local precedents
- Inefficient use of land and materials, which often results in higher build costs, running costs and energy consumption
- Housing isolated from the wider community and community facilities, with a high degree of car dependence and little integration with neighbouring centres.

Offsetting these challenges presents several opportunities to transform the quality of housing in Kent and Medway. There is scope for a new vernacular: places and homes that are not half hearted copies from the past, but which are anchored to the geology, landscape and traditions of their locality.

There is evidence across the County that developers and local authorities are already beginning to embrace this ethos, and build high quality, efficient, modern homes that fit with, rather than fight against, their surroundings (see *Case Study 5*).

Case Study 5 – The Fishing Village, St Mary's Island, Chatham Maritime

The Fishing Village sits within St Mary's Island, formerly part of the 420 acre Royal Naval Dockyard at Chatham. It is part of a much larger public and private sector investment at Chatham Maritime.

It was completed in 2004 and provides 151 homes spread between seven apartment blocks and about 50 houses.

The Village represents a new departure for St Mary's Island in terms of its design, with the layout of homes to the streets emulating the sense a village that has been built over a period of time. A strong sense of place is created by architecture that responds to the maritime location, with a reinterpretation of traditional vernacular using traditional detailing, bold colours and steeply pitched roofs that emulate a typical coastal settlement in Kent.



The development was awarded 'Best Brownfield Development' in 2005 (National Homebuilder Design Awards) and achieved CABI's 'Building for Life' Silver standard.

Sustainability is a key feature of all the homes, with an emphasis on energy efficiency and water conservation. All homes include solar panels and rainwater harvesting and have been constructed from timber from sustainable forests.

Developers should look to use new technologies in building design and construction to improve the performance of buildings and drive changes to the appearance and character of housing, places and neighbourhoods. They should aim for high standards in design and sustainability – getting ahead of the Code for Sustainable Homes to achieve efficient layouts and thinking beyond the site. They should also look to use materials that are sourced locally, including recycled materials.

New homes should contain fit for purpose and future-proofed technology, particularly in rural areas where there are likely to be greater barriers to upgrades to infrastructure.

Local authorities can support innovation and the principles of mixed tenure, mixed uses and better masterplanning through adopting clear policies on design quality, following national best practice and using techniques such as characterisation to define local character. To raise expectations and facilitate the delivery of good design, local authorities can also apply good processes such as Design Reviews which through the South East Regional Design Panel provide independent expert appraisals on the quality of design proposals.

RECOMMENDATION: Review and update the Kent Design Guide, to continue to promote excellence in design across Kent and Medway and raise the profile and encourage wider use of tools such as Building for Life.

4. Designing in safety

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service has, for some time, been promoting the reduction of risk from fire or flooding in the built environment. Not only does this provide an important part of controlling and reducing environmental impact it can also support cost efficient and flexible design. The use of new techniques and the early engagement of Kent Fire and Rescue Service at the design stage, can ensure that innovative design is considered and exploited. For example, building out fire risk through practical measures can remove the need for expensive fire resisting doors and compartments, giving cost and design options.

People are living longer and can require help to remain safe within their own home as they get older. Services such as the Handy Van scheme and Telecare can help to improve the quality of life for people by increasing their levels of safety and independence in their own homes.

The maintenance of independence into old age is an important part of housing design. Using the Lifetime Homes design standard can help to ensure that homes meet the needs of the occupiers throughout their lives, reducing the impact on public services.

This is particularly true of fire and flood risk and there are a number of ways that these risks can be controlled. These range from sprinkler systems and cooker shut-off systems, to rain-water harvesting and practical flood damage reduction measures.

People living in older properties or experiencing fuel poverty are generally at greater risk from fire. The Kent Fire and Rescue Service is keen to engage with developers and designers to promote and support economically and environmentally innovative design that provides safe and sustainable accommodation.

RECOMMEDATION:The Kent Fire and Rescue Service, KHG and JPPB identify shared priorities for multi-agency assessment of fire risk and delivery of services aimed in particular at vulnerable households who are in the greatest risk from fire.A similar approach should be followed for reducing flood risk and the impact of flooding.

Secured by Design (SBD) is an award scheme, run by the Association of Chief Police Officers, and supported by the government. It aims to encourage housing developments to design out crime, with a particular emphasis on burglary, at the planning stage. Applied by Kent Police, it assesses physical security, surveillance, access/egress, territoriality, management and maintenance of an estate. SBD is applied within the planning framework, but does not align with current urban design guidance.

Kent Police, working with its partners, would like to build on the principles of SBD to develop new form of county-wide consistent 'designing out crime' guidance, encouraging designers to consider design prevention in the formative stages, on how to establish the right level of permeability, mix of uses or tenure or connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods.



Theme 3: Affordability and Choice

Our Ambition: *The provision of choice and affordability in housing for the citizens of Kent and Medway, including rural communities, which meets their needs and aspirations.*

I. Context

All citizens in Kent and Medway should be able to access the home of their choice. However, in the current climate, access and choice in the housing market is more limited. The increase in house prices over the last 12 years has outstripped wage inflation. This, combined with the restriction in available mortgage finance, has left homeownership out of the reach of many.

The research supporting this Strategy identifies the existing average age of a first time buyer without support from the “Bank of Mum and Dad” as being 37 and rising. It has been suggested by some commentators that this is as high as 41 in parts of West Kent.

Affordability is a particularly acute problem in rural areas, with the average rural house price being substantially higher than the average urban house price. Access to affordable private rented homes in rural areas is also extremely low.

The inability of many to access home ownership means that the rental sector will play an increasingly important role in providing homes for the citizens of Kent and Medway. People should be able to access high

quality rental property and have the choice to be able to move with relative ease within the social rented sector, or from rental into home ownership (see Case Study 6).

Case Study 6 – Shepway Settled Homes Initiative

Shepway District Council has worked with Town and Country Housing Group (TCHG) to address the shortage of larger affordable family homes in the district and maximise the number of new affordable homes delivered through the council's own capital resources for housing.

So far the partnership has delivered eight, three and four bedrooms homes for families in housing need. Shepway has provided grant resources of approximately £35,000 per property with the additional resources being provided by Town and Country Housing Group (approximately £135k per property). The properties are owned and managed by TCHG.

Rent levels are linked to the local housing allowance for the district, however, should the circumstances of the households living in the homes change, there is scope to convert the tenure to shared ownership in the future.

2. Access to home ownership

Current restrictions on the availability of mortgage finance mean that previous options are no longer accessible to many people. This means that new and innovative solutions are needed to respond to the needs and aspirations of those currently unable to access owner-occupation.

To this end, authorities across Kent and Medway should consider the benefits of setting up a fund to support:

- people to access the home ownership market; and
- developers to complete new developments, including potentially the private rented sector.

As a consequence of the fall in house prices, there is growing interest from the private sector to invest in residential property. Recently the Mill Group announced the launch of a new fund to be invested through a co-ownership model for new homes and there is well publicised interest from the institutional market looking to gain exposure to the private rented sector.

If authorities across Kent and Medway were to invest equity to support broadening housing choice across Kent, matched funding should be sought from the private sector to increase the potential fund size and its impact.

RECOMMENDATION: Explore options for increasing affordable mortgage finance and the potential to create a fund to support investment across Kent and Medway to broaden housing choice.

3. Rural Housing

The affordability of rural housing has been an area of growing national debate and remains a key issue for Kent and Medway's rural communities and businesses. The average rural house price remains substantially higher than the average urban house price – and the gap is widening. As a result, housing need, demand for housing advice and numbers on housing register lists in rural areas has been rising.

Affordable local needs housing within rural areas is important in helping to underpin the wider sustainability of Kent's villages. The *Kent Rural Delivery Framework* outlines how the current shortage of affordable local needs housing (i.e. housing to meet the housing needs of the local community and businesses) is creating a number of wider economic, social and environmental impacts. These include lower paid workers not being able to live locally and young people being unable to set-up home close to their families and consequently moving away from rural areas.

“The number of homes required in individual communities is often very small, but their impact will be immense. Locally-made decisions in these communities relating to just a few affordable homes can be crucial to the sustainability of the community, its shop, pub, school and local businesses”
(Taylor Report, July 2008)

Affordable rural local needs housing is also vital in helping to unlock the potential of and secure growth within, Kent's £5.5 billion rural economy. In particular, the specific needs of horticultural and agricultural businesses to accommodate workers should not be overlooked.

3.1. The current picture

The county of Kent has one of the largest rural populations of any county in England. Nearly one in three of Kent's residents live in a rural area, compared to one in five in England and one in four in the South East. Rural housing issues, therefore, tend to have a proportionately greater impact on Kent than many other counties – particularly when coupled with the County's proximity to London.

The primary issue is that a proportion of households (or people who would like to form households) living in the rural areas of Kent and Medway are unable to afford to accommodate themselves within the market – either through home ownership or private renting. Figure 9 demonstrates how the pattern of house prices varies across Kent and Medway, with the rural areas having the highest prices.

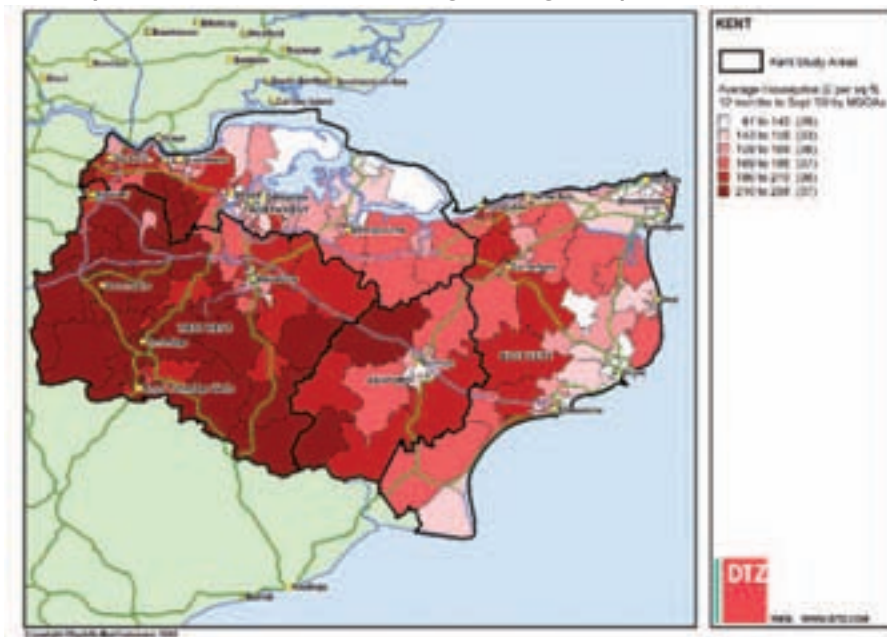


Figure 9: Average House Prices £ Per Square Metre, September 2009

This contributes to poor affordability within rural areas for some households. To some extent these households move away from rural areas to access cheaper accommodation elsewhere – and this reinforces the process of selective migration - with younger households moving out and older more affluent ones moving in. For some of these households who are unable to afford to live within a rural area, remaining within the rural area is important either because of their job or because they need to be near to family or support networks.

The availability of affordable local needs housing within rural areas is relatively low. Most local authorities and Housing Associations have limited numbers of homes within rural towns and villages compared with larger urban areas and these have also been significantly eroded in rural areas through the Right to Buy. The availability of cheap private rented accommodation is also low. This means that there are few options for households in the rural parts of the County to meet their housing needs where they live.

3.2. Understanding the key barriers to delivery

Although delivery has begun to improve over the last decade, key barriers to delivering affordable rural local needs housing in Kent and Medway remain. These are:

a) Availability of suitable land

The most common and most important barrier is the availability of sites within rural areas and the difficulties in securing land. The process for identifying land for development depends on the local approach to delivery, which varies from area to area. Even where potential sites are identified, these can often turn out to be unsuitable in planning terms or have landowners who are reluctant to release the site for development.

b) Planning and highway constraints

The requirements of the planning application needed for a rural scheme can often be much higher than that required for similar standard urban development, often resulting in a lengthier planning application process.

Equally, meeting access and highways requirements can add significant costs and time to a rural development.

c) Relatively higher costs of developing and managing schemes in rural areas

The costs of bringing forward an application and for developing affordable local needs housing in rural areas can often be higher than elsewhere in Kent and Medway. This is due to a number of factors, including the more intensive planning application process; the cost of mitigating site constraints such as access and the demand for a higher quality of build.

Although grant for affordable local needs housing in rural areas had been forthcoming from the Homes and Communities Agency, the rate of grant is expected to decrease in the future. This will make it increasingly challenging to deliver affordable local needs housing in rural areas.

d) Public opposition to development

Local opposition to new affordable local needs housing development in rural areas can often occur. This often arises out of a general lack of awareness and understanding about the need for affordable local needs housing in rural areas and the benefits it can bring both to local people who otherwise could not afford to stay in the area and to the wider rural community.

Opposition can either stop a development or where unsuccessful add time and cost to rural schemes. This means that local housing and planning authorities and Housing Associations need to develop a significant pipeline of projects in order to maintain the flow of development.

The introduction of the proposed *Community Right to Build* is intended to enable development, but there is also a concern that it could stifle development in rural areas where there is a lack of information about the need for, and benefits of, affordable local needs housing to communities. The role of the Rural Housing Enabler Service will be critical to ensuring that this is not the case (see *Case Study 7*).



Case Study 7 – Egret Court, Lower Halstow

In 2004, Lower Halstow Parish Council, working with the Rural Housing Enabler, (RHE) decided they would like to investigate the housing needs of their community. A survey was undertaken by the RHE, which identified 9 households in housing need, 8 of whom lived in the village at the time and 1 who had family living there.

A site search was undertaken by the RHE, English Rural Housing Association and members of the Parish Council and after lengthy and extensive consultation both locally and with planners and other statutory bodies, planning consent was granted in April 2008.

The development was completed in 2009 and comprises two 1-bedroom flats and four 2-bedroom houses, which are a mix of rented and shared ownership. All homes meet the standards of the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, *Secured By Design, Lifetime Homes and Building for Life*.

Importantly, a legal s106 agreement is in place to ensure that the homes are only available to people who meet the local connection criteria and that they must remain so in perpetuity.

3.3. Working together to break those barriers down

Joint working amongst key stakeholders is vital to ensure that these barriers are broken and affordable local needs housing is delivered in the rural areas where it is needed. This has already shown to be gaining real results in Ashford, where Ashford Borough Council has developed a 'round table' approach to facilitating the development of rural local needs housing schemes in Ashford. This has been instrumental in generating higher levels of rural affordable local needs housing delivery in Ashford (see Case Study 8).

Replicating such joint working at a strategic level would help housing organisations across the Kent and Medway area to tackle the barriers identified above in a consistent manner. A Protocol, developed through partnership, could provide the framework to ensure that affordable local needs housing is delivered where it is needed.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a Kent and Medway Rural Housing Protocol, to create an innovative environment to enable, and act as a catalyst for, an increase in the delivery of affordable local needs housing in rural areas.

Case Study 8 – Ashford Rural Round Table

Ashford Borough Council has actively worked with Parish Councils to identify local housing needs and then develop small schemes on exception sites to meet those needs.

A vital element has been the Council's Rural Round Table; a quarterly meeting involving key stakeholders where the overall Borough rural programme is reviewed. The round table is an important vehicle for resolving planning, highways and other issues throughout the planning and construction process.

It can identify any problems at an early stage and seek a proactive, joined up way to resolve them. This contributes to the development of plans that are supported by planning and highways before their submission for planning consent.

Membership includes:

- Housing, Planning and Legal representatives from Ashford Borough Council
- Kent County Council Highways officers
- Partner Housing Associations working on rural schemes

This approach has led to the delivery of 293 local needs homes on exception sites in 18 parishes, with a further 41 homes in the pipeline.

Several parishes have also been so pleased with the outcomes of their scheme that they have gone on to develop further schemes in their villages.

4. Delivering more choice in social housing

Research has shown that social housing tenants are far less mobile than residents living in other forms of tenure. The 2007 *Hills Report* concluded that 'people can get locked into a particular property' due to a lack of mobility, which can restrict opportunity and choice, particularly in the labour market. This has been recognised by the government with their *National Home Swap Scheme*. There is also an issue of under-occupation within social housing, with people remaining in family-sized houses after their children have grown up and left home.

Choice based lettings encourage people to be proactive in considering their housing options, and helps break the culture of dependency. It can also help to relieve the issue of under-occupation within social housing, enabling people to downsize to a smaller property that better meets their needs.

Through the *Kent Choice Based Lettings Partnership (KCLP)*, local housing authorities have been delivering more choice in social housing allocations to customers (see *Case Study 9*). The partnership now aims to expand this choice by enabling housing applicants to move to homes across Kent local authority boundaries.



Case Study 9 – Kent Homechoice

Roll-out of the Kent Homechoice scheme to all the Council areas in Kent began in July 2008 with Canterbury and Thanet councils, and completed in May 2010 with Medway Council.

Kent Homechoice provides a comprehensive choice based lettings service to all housing applicants in Kent, allowing them to express an interest in available homes by a variety of methods, including through the internet.

The scheme has been a tremendous success, bringing councils, housing associations, landlords and strategic partners together to provide a high quality transparent service to the people of Kent. It is the largest Choice Based Lettings scheme in the UK, with 14 participating councils and 20 housing associations as full partners and has attracted £150,000 of Government funds to set up and expand the scheme.

So far, it has advertised over 11,000 vacant homes and received 336,000 bids from customers with over 90% of bids received via the Homechoice website.

The service is continuously improving and soon customers will be able to advertise exchanges through the scheme.

With the continued success of the KCLP, the Kent Housing Group is working with local authority and Housing Association partners to identify and work up a common assessment framework for housing allocations that would form part of Kent Choice Based Lettings and fit in with the existing process.

The framework will cover such matters as access to the housing list, eligibility for an offer of accommodation, prioritisation between applicants and provide a mechanism for cross-boundary bidding.

5. Expanding the private rented sector

The age of the average first time buyer is rising and the research supporting this Strategy indicates that owner occupation has potentially reached its limits at possibly 70% across Kent.

The importance of the private rented sector (PRS) is therefore likely to increase over the coming years as more people find it difficult to access the home ownership market. The proposals within the *Local Decisions* consultation paper for local authorities to be able to discharge their homelessness duty by offering suitable private rented accommodation and the introduction of fixed term social tenancies will only help to increase this importance.

There is significant interest, from both the private and public sector, in the establishment of an institutionally-funded PRS in England. Within Kent and Medway, the Homes and Communities Agency has provided funding to 2 sites, Holborough Lakes and Victory Pier, to support new homes for rent and seek to attract institutional investment.

The key issue in attracting institutional (and sizeable private) equity is one of scale. The objective is to secure a sector that eventually becomes a bespoke asset class within which investors are willing to invest in the same way that they do with other property asset classes.

5.1 What are the benefits of facilitating growth of this sector?

The benefits of assisting the growth of this sector include:

- Offering greater mobility of employment through people being able to move home more easily.
- Supporting tenure diversification.
- Accelerating and increasing the delivery of new homes.

There is considerable potential for a rental fund to work in conjunction with other regeneration, estate renewal or affordable housing models.

If the public sector across Kent and Medway has land ownership, it could consider contributing land as equity into the model in order to facilitate delivery of new homes; in effect deferring its land receipt until disposal of the PRS fund and potentially sharing in rental returns.

1. Site needs to be capable of supporting at least 100 rented homes. Could be part of a significantly greater mixed tenure site.
2. Site must be close to a major transport hub, with good access to the nearest town or city and close to community services.
3. Houses prices need to be mid-range, but rental market needs to be robust.
4. Site must support a range of different sized homes.
5. Place-making is key in establishing a location where there is strong demand for the completed homes

Figure 10 - Where would private rented accommodation be most likely to be successful?

RECOMMENDATION: Promote the establishment of a sizeable institutional or private equity funded private rented sector and identify developments within which it could potentially be included.

5.2 Providing support to landlords and tenants

To reflect the growth in the sector, local authorities need to ensure that properties are maintained to a good standard and are in decent condition. The majority of poor condition homes are found in the private sector, which can have detrimental effects on tenants' health and well-being.

It is important that landlords understand their responsibilities towards their tenants and obligations to look after their properties. Landlord accreditation schemes have been set up across the County, providing advice to landlords to try and help improve housing conditions and raise standards across the sector (see *Case Study 10*).



We also need to ensure that private sector tenants are adequately supported and given a voice. This could reflect existing good practice in the social rented sector, where active tenants' forums are already in existence, such as the South East Kent Tenants' Participation Forum and the Kent and Sussex Resident Involvement Alliance.

Work is progressing in partnership with the National Landlords' Association, to investigate the potential for setting-up a private sector tenants' information programme across Kent and Medway.

Support for more vulnerable tenants who leave supported housing to enter the private rented sector can be provided by the use of a JPPB Move on Toolkit.

Case Study 10 – Private Accredited Letting Scheme

Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Ashford Borough Council are keen to increase the supply of decent and well-managed privately rented homes and improve on the availability of safe, warm homes for tenants to live in.

The Private Accredited Letting Scheme (PAL) has been developed to encourage and support the many good landlords who already operate in the borough and also to assist others in attaining the same good standards.

The Scheme is free for any landlord wishing to join and aims to improve the standard of private sector rental accommodation.

Landlords can benefit from training and financial assistance for improvement works, such as replacing old boilers and heaters with new energy efficient units, and measures to prevent entry by intruders.

Through PAL, a property in Edenbridge which was suffering from excess cold, condensation and mould growth has had recent improvements to the heating system and insulation, which has made the property warm and comfortable and the tenant is delighted with the results.

Theme 4: Housing Renewal

Our Ambition: *The managed improvement and retrofit of existing homes to make them fit for now and the future*

I. Context

Improving the condition and efficiency of our existing homes is a significant issue.

It is suggested that around 80% of the houses that people will be living in by 2050 are already in existence. Many of these, particularly in East Kent and Tunbridge Wells, are in poor condition and can be significant contributors to the poor health and well-being of the occupants.

Some also remain as long term empty properties, providing a blight on the local community through their appearance and their ability to attract anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

A large proportion of existing homes are poorly insulated, water and energy inefficient, leading to higher than necessary fuel and water bills for Kent and Medway residents and higher carbon emissions across the area.

Non-efficient homes contribute greatly to overall carbon emissions. It is estimated that 27% of Kent's CO₂ emissions during 2008 came from the domestic sector.

Housing must be resilient to the changes and the risks posed by climate change, particularly flood and heat damage. This is not only for protection of property, but for the health and well-being of the householders themselves.

Water is a scarce and often over-committed resource and Kent, like much of the South East, has low rainfall, and is a designated area of water stress. It is already in a similar category to southern Italy and Malta in terms of water abstracted as a proportion of effective rainfall, making the county very vulnerable to droughts. By 2050 the flows in some of the County's rivers could be reduced by at least 35% as a result of climate change, while population growth will create new demands for water. We must become a lot more efficient at using water in the future.

Improving the efficiency of existing homes could also help to put money back in the pockets of Kent and Medway residents.



2. Improving the condition of existing homes

The majority of poor condition housing in Kent is found within the private sector, both rented and owner occupier. Across Kent and Medway as a whole, around a fifth of private sector properties have one or more Category I hazard, as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), with the most common being related to falls and the cold, and are therefore in a condition that could pose a risk to the health and safety of the occupiers.

The introduction of the HHSRS has allowed local housing authorities to deal with poor conditions within the private sector on a risk basis considering the impact of the property on the occupier's health, safety and welfare.

Use of the Housing Act powers alone is unlikely to deal with the poor conditions of properties and to date grant and loan schemes have only scratched the surface.

Partnership working to address these issues, particularly with health services, is extremely important. Through HHSRS links between housing and health have become strengthened and a closer working relationship has developed with agencies such as the NHS.

However, this is not so in all areas of the County and one of the challenges faced by authorities is the engagement of health services in housing work. The changes to the Primary Care Trust structure and the introduction of GP consortia provide an opportunity to maintain and strengthen these links further.

Case Study 11 - North & West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership

The North & West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership consists of eight local authorities – Ashford Borough Council, Dartford Borough Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Medway Unitary, Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council - and was formed in 2007 in order to make a bid for Regional Housing Board funding for private sector renewal.

The partnership was successful in securing over £10 million to focus on making homes decent and improving energy efficiency across the area especially for vulnerable households over the period 2008-2011.



Over 2000 grants/loans have been completed so far which has resulted in over 1600 homes being made decent and/or having Category I hazards removed. A total of 784 tonnes of CO2 has so far been saved by improving heating and insulation as well as fitting renewable technology e.g. solar panels.

Tackling substandard private sector accommodation will make a significant impact to the lives of their occupiers, particularly tenants, many of whom are vulnerable, by making their homes warmer, removing hazards and taking them out of fuel poverty.

RECOMMENDATION: Local authorities should seek to establish strong links and closer working relationships with health agencies to achieve common goals around accident reduction in the home and improved housing condition.

3. Improving the efficiency of existing homes

Kent and Medway residents need to be sure that their homes are resilient to the implications of severe weather events and on-going climate change, including flood risk and hotter summers.

There is a very complicated landscape of funding currently available from public sector organisations and private business for energy efficient home improvements. Millions of pounds of funding for vulnerable Kent and Medway residents to retrofit homes are currently not being claimed. Take-up of this should be made easier and simpler for Kent and Medway households.

The coalition government recently announced a new Green Deal as part of the *Energy Security and Green Economy Bill*. This aims to encourage householders to make energy efficiency improvements to their home, by offering customers an up-front loan to cover the cost of the improvements. The loan repayments will be attached to the energy bill rather than the individual, allowing the repayment obligation to move to the new occupier, should the original Green Deal applicant move away. The Green Deal's "golden rule" is that the loan repayments should not exceed the projected savings on the energy bill for the duration of the loan period.

RECOMMENDATION: Radically simplify the energy efficiency funding and support landscape for Kent and Medway residents and support the development of and access to innovative finance mechanisms such as the Green Deal.

In the short term, the efficiency of existing homes should be improved through the intensification of basic energy and water efficiency installations, and development of initiatives designed for hard to treat homes such as those with solid walls, or more simply where accessing loft space is an issue.

The longer term approach should be to focus on the 'whole house' incorporating renewable energy and other measures which have longer payback periods.

Kent is already benefiting from a number of retrofitting pilot schemes, such as Ashford's *Savings at Home* project and the *Kent Retrofit* project which aim to road test the carbon reductions gained from community retrofitting and look at how this can be scaled up across Kent.

Savings at Home developed from a pilot neighbourhood water efficiency retrofit scheme, Savings on Tap, which trialled an installation mechanism for high uptake of low impact, low cost, proven water saving devices within a neighbourhood. The project has been successful and take-up rates of over 50% have been achieved in the trial neighbourhood.

Both projects look at how best to use public resources more efficiently to maximise uptake of measures, and deliver energy and water savings for residents.

Area-based retrofitting projects are also being developed for Queenborough and Rushenden on the Isle of Sheppey, as part of the Thames Gateway (see *Case Study 12*).

Case Study 12 – Retrofit in Rushenden

Rushenden is a small village in the Borough of Swale containing 484 homes with an approximate 50/50 mix of social and private homes.

Starting in 2011, Swale Borough Council and AmicusHorizon, will retrofit more than half of these homes, installing various measures across different tenures and house types, using funding from Homes and Communities Agency, Regional Housing Board, Community Energy Saving Programme, Interreg and AmicusHorizon.

One of the key aspects of this retrofit scheme, and what sets it apart from proposals elsewhere, is that it focuses on the social elements of sustainability, with an aim to increase knowledge and awareness of environmental issues within communities and change lifestyles. This can involve raising awareness within the local community, as well as working with schools and colleges to attract young people to champion the cause.



There will be a comprehensive monitoring, measurement and evaluation research exercise throughout the life of the programme, which will provide valuable information for the wider replication of physical retrofit activity.

4. Bringing empty properties back into use

Empty properties constitute a wasted resource that could provide homes as well as reduce the pressure for new housing growth. They also often have a negative impact on local neighbourhoods by their visual appearance, and a tendency to attract graffiti, vandalism, squatting and anti-social behaviour.

The coalition government has shown its support for bringing empty properties back into use both through the £100m of funding it has made available in the Comprehensive Spending Review and the proposal that the New Homes Bonus will apply to long-term empties brought back into use.

Reducing the number of empty properties across Kent and Medway contributes to regeneration objectives, creating a virtuous circle by bringing people to live in our town centres and thus acting as a catalyst for further investment in facilities such as restaurants, bars and shops.



Since 2005, around 1300 empty properties have been returned to use through the No Use Empty initiative. It is the ambition of local authorities across Kent and Medway to work in partnership to continue to deliver and maintain a reduction in the number of long term empty and derelict buildings – transforming these into homes for the people of Kent and Medway. Authorities have made returning empty properties a key priority.

In order to foster a more corporate approach over the next two years, Kent and Medway authorities will share experiences, such as No Use Empty and Medway's Purchase and Repair Scheme.

RECOMMENDATION: Encourage closer joint working between No Use Empty, Districts & Boroughs and Medway, and seek to attract new government funding to bring further empty properties back into use across Kent and Medway.

Case Study 13 – No Use Empty

Dover has had some particular successes in restoring empty properties. The old Victorian warehouse on Worthington Street, in the centre of Dover, had been derelict for over ten years. The current owner, Kent-based property developer Philip Bigio, was granted an interest-free loan a year ago from No Use Empty to meet the renovation costs required to convert the building into luxury apartments. Now complete, the new Warehouse Caves Court features six 2-bedroom apartments, two loft apartments and private courtyard with allocated parking, security gates and video entry system. In addition to the loan from No Use Empty, a further grant and support has been provided by Dover District Council.

Owner of the property, Philip Bigio, said: "The No Use Empty Initiative has been a tremendous support in facilitating the re-development of the building. We have been able to move quickly, carry out the renovations in under a year, and the net result is a cluster of new apartments in a prime location in the centre of town, which I'm sure, will be sought after."



Theme 5: Housing Need

Our Ambition: *To support vulnerable people in housing need to fulfil their potential and live a high quality life through the provision of excellent housing and support services.*

1. Context

Good housing should meet the needs and aspirations of all Kent and Medway residents. Housing plays an important part in responding to the diverse needs of particularly vulnerable people in Kent and Medway. Housing is critical to the health and well-being of vulnerable people.

Vulnerable people tend to need a wider range of types of accommodation to meet their needs and have a greater reliance on housing support and advice services.

Taking a Kent and Medway-wide approach has been identified as an important contributor to achieve better services and provide better experiences for those with complex housing needs.

This part of the Strategy has largely been developed in partnership with colleagues involved in the Joint Policy and Planning Board for Housing (JPPB), Kent Supporting People Programme and Medway colleagues.

2. Young people

Priority 4 of the Kent Children and Young People's Plan, developed and owned by the Kent Children's Trust, makes specific reference to the importance of housing in relation to vulnerable children and young people.

Vulnerable young people should have access to a range of housing and support options in their local areas, which meet their housing, support and development needs. Unfortunately this does not always happen at present.

Due to a lack of supported housing, many homeless young people are placed in temporary accommodation, including Bed & Breakfast. Homeless young people are often very vulnerable, have multiple needs and are in need of support as well as accommodation. In view of this, more specific 24-hour support services are required. Young tenants may also need practical help and advice on issues such as applying for benefits, budgeting and paying their bills to help them sustain their tenancy and avoid eviction.

There is widespread hidden homelessness (sofa surfing) across Kent and Medway, particularly amongst NEETs (not in employment, education or training). Sizeable numbers of young people have no stable housing when leaving Young Offender Institutions and young people who have been in care are more likely to be more profoundly and widely disadvantaged than those without a care background and are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and rough sleeping.

There has been some success through the Kent Supporting People Programme in informing housing needs information in relation to young people at risk and teenage parents. It is currently commissioning services in every area of Kent except Maidstone and Swale and has already delivered temporary housing for young people in Dover, with a new build scheme in Tonbridge and Malling coming on line in 2011 (see *Case Study 14*).

The JPPB has developed a protocol around dealing with young people and homelessness and a series of multi-agency training events have been arranged to embed this into working practices.

RECOMMENDATION:The JPPB in partnership with Supporting People, Children's Social Services Commissioners and the Kent Children's' Trust to identify funding to commission support services to prevent homelessness and provide new accommodation to respond to the needs of homeless children and young people.

Case Study 14 – Housing Support for Young People

Kent Supporting People has been instrumental in 2 Kent-based schemes providing housing and support for vulnerable young people: one in Dover and one in Tonbridge and Malling.

In 2008 Dover District Council had experienced a significant increase in youth homelessness and identified a need to provide specialist supported housing. The Supporting People Commissioning Body agreed the funding of accommodation based supported housing. Through AmicusHorizon and a local private landlord they secured temporary accommodation to deliver self contained flats for 9 young people in a building that also has communal spaces for meetings and mutual support.

The scheme has proved to be a great success. With support provided by a dedicated team of support workers, a number of young people have already gained the skills and confidence to enable them to move on to their own independent homes.

A 2007 review of short term accommodation based services recommended the commissioning of services for young people at risk in West Kent. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Circle Anglia were able to find a site and commence the building of the required property. Floating support was provided by Kent Supporting People to young people at risk during the building stage, and funding for this will be transferred to the accommodation-based support when the service commences in April 2011.

3. Learning disability

Valuing People Now - Making it Happen has set out a clear cross government strategy for all services involved in working with people with a Learning Disability to ensure they have a real choice about where and how they wish to live.

The diversity of type and tenure of housing options for people with a learning disability in Kent and Medway should be increased. Currently a significant number of people with a learning disability are living in residential care and yet many wish to live in their own home in their local community and do not want to move away to services that disrupt the many links they are building with their family, friends and local services. Where appropriate, such as in areas with an identified need, specialised schemes could also be developed.

To support this ambition a *Kent Housing Action Plan for People with a Learning Disability* has been developed by the Joint Policy and Planning Board (JPPB) and a toolkit for all districts has been distributed to help make this happen.

RECOMMENDATION: Promote through the JPPB the use of the Kent Housing Action Plan for People with a Learning Disability and toolkit to identify the level of need and develop appropriate service responses.

4. Mental health

Research shows that 45% of people with mental health problems face eviction because of problems such as rent arrears or problems repairing or coping with maintaining a home.

Joint preventative working can help to enable early identification of mental health or substance misuse problems that could contribute to loss of home (or living in poor condition e.g. cold homes) and where possible maintain or improve existing accommodation. This could lead to a reduction in homelessness applications and increased numbers of people with substance misuse problems accessing treatment.

An increase in housing options for those with mental health or substance misuse problems, in particular access to the private rented sector should help to improve move on from supported housing.

RECOMMENDATION: The JPPB, including Supporting People, to work with housing providers to ensure that the right services are in place to meet the needs of people with a mental health problem, including suitable protocols and referral and move on processes and that local services are protected.

5. Meeting the needs of older adults

With an increasingly ageing population, creating homes that both active older adults and older people with health and care needs want to live in is crucial. Kent's *Policy Framework for Later Life* has identified the importance of ensuring that older people have choice; with a range of housing options available that older people can select from as their circumstances change.

Significant initiatives and examples of joint-working in Kent are certainly in evidence across health, housing and social care. However, further steps are required in order to achieve a genuine whole-system approach to planning and developing accommodation, care and support services, as well as to the provision of information and advice.

Given the scale of the challenge posed to all services by the ageing population, alongside the economic downturn, partners in Kent and Medway should take action to pursue a more holistic approach to planning for the future, in order to improve outcomes for older people and achieve more cost-effective investment of public money.

In the current challenging financial climate, it is more important than ever that public finances on social care are spent in a way which delivers the best possible outcomes for older people, as well as ensuring value for money.



Consideration should be given to the development of a focused, integrated vision for health, housing and social care services for older people. This could be 'owned' at county level by the JPPB with Medway Council and would have clear links to local priorities. This could include a commitment to consult with and listen to representatives from older people's groups.

Housing for older people is not just about social care options. So-called under-occupation of large family homes by elderly couples or single people is starting to become a significant issue across the County. The provision of high quality smaller accommodation for older people may help to encourage them to downsize, freeing up larger properties for the family market. The Kent-wide initiative being developed by Kent Home Choice aims to promote downsizing to tackle under-occupation within the social rented sector (see *Case Study 15*).

Where older people wish to remain in their own home, they may require both practical and financial help to do so. Building homes to meet the *Lifetime Homes* design standard can help mitigate the need for costly adaptations in the future. Many older people who own their own home are asset rich but cash poor, and would benefit from a way in which to release the equity they hold in their home (see *Case Study 16*).

Case Study 15 – Under-occupation in Gravesham

Gravesham Borough Council worked closely with Affinity Sutton to develop an effective and meaningful Local Lettings Plan for a new-build scheme at The Terrace in Gravesend.

The purpose of the Plan was to provide a sustainable mix of residents whilst at the same time enabling under-occupying council tenants to downsize to more appropriate accommodation and in doing so, freeing up much needed family housing in the borough.

Some months prior to expected completion of the scheme, the Council contacted Gravesham residents who were under-occupying council homes, offering advice and information on incentives for downsizing and details of the new-build scheme at The Terrace.

The response was extremely good, with many residents phoning for advice or calling into the Civic Centre to view plans of the new homes prior to placing bids via Kent HomeChoice.

It is intended that Gravesham continue with a similar approach on new developments whilst also giving good publicity to under occupying residents of the incentives available from the Council for giving up under-occupied properties for more suitably sized ones.

Older people are also more likely to suffer from fuel poverty and need help to heat their homes during winter. The Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership has set up the KASH scheme to help Kent residents save money through energy saving improvements in their homes and the *Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy* sets out a series of objectives designed to help the fuel poor in Kent move into affordable warmth.

Case Study 16 – Equity Release in Maidstone

Maidstone Borough Council wanted to facilitate and promote an equity release scheme as a valuable service for the wellbeing of its older home-owners, particularly those who are asset rich but cash poor.

It is piloting a scheme that provides an equity release product for the over 65s that aims to be affordable, resilient and has been created with the clients' best interest at its heart.

Older home-owners may only need an extra £20 or £30 a week to pay for additional help at home and improve their quality of life, but many can't afford this on their small incomes, which is where the new pilot scheme may be able to help. In many cases people may simply be missing out on benefits they are entitled to, but if this still doesn't provide enough extra money, an equity release product may enable them to top up their income, safely and easily, without losing their benefits.

There is a need to identify current and future supply expectations, as well as older people's needs and aspirations, and evidence of cost-effectiveness, to inform decisions about how to direct future public resource.

RECOMMENDATION: Commission research into the existing housing provision, including under-occupation, mapped against the long-term aspirations of the people of Kent and Medway as they get older to understand future older people's needs.

6. Reducing re-offending

Housing has often been considered as a key element in the resettlement of ex-offenders following their release from prison.

The Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK) have recently undertaken a project looking at the issues around the resettlement of offenders in Kent and Medway with a focus on how housing issues contribute to the problem of re-offending. The project brought together a multi-agency team who commissioned ethnographic researchers to look closely at the experience of individuals who have been through the system, identifying issues and gaps.

The project explored how to build on joint working between agencies to identify more ways to work together to respond better to systematic problems faced by offenders and reduce re-offending.

The JPPB Offender sub group has recently reviewed the Kent wide multi-agency protocol for the Resettlement and Housing of Offenders to identify better working relationships across all agencies. JPPB will continue with its current work stream to identify barriers to housing for offenders and to work towards reducing the 'revolving door' effect for prolific offenders.

RECOMMENDATION: The JPPB should act on the learning from the re-thinking resettlement research and invite both the Prison Service and Police to join the Board to work together to tackle the issues raised.

7. Gypsies and Travellers

There is a need to reduce the number of unauthorised sites across Kent and Medway and deter the setting up of new unauthorised sites. Local determination of the scale of affordable pitches required by Gypsies and Travellers will help to tackle this issue and Local Investment Plans have helped to identify where there is a need for new sites.

Collaboration between partners will determine the level of demand for pitches from those in housing (including those who have simply moved into housing because of lack of pitches) and reduce some of the related health implications of people being unsuccessfully accommodated in housing.

Partnerships involving Housing Associations and others are important to enable pitches to be established which can be managed alongside affordable housing.

8. Supporting People

Kent and Medway are covered by two Supporting People programmes, which provide services to people with clearly evidenced housing related support needs who are less likely to be receiving support from elsewhere and need support for a time limited period. These include groups with particular vulnerabilities, such as young people at risk, teenage parents, people living with HIV/AIDS, people with substance misuse problems and people at risk of domestic abuse.

Vulnerable people are entitled to enjoy the same choice, freedom, dignity, control and substantive opportunities as persons who are 'not vulnerable'. The programme aims to enable these people to maintain their housing situation, manage their finances, co-exist successfully in

their community, acquire independent living skills, stay safe, liaise with other agencies, and access training, education, and employment.

The Kent Supporting People programme has an overarching aim to work in partnership to deliver needs-led, value for money, high quality housing support services for vulnerable people.

In addition the programme aims to ensure that these services:

- Are accessible to those who need them
- Promote independence and well being
- Enable people to take control over their lives
- Participate fully in the social and economic life of their communities
- Complement services delivered by statutory and non-statutory agencies
- Support service users who have little or no recourse to alternative statutory or non statutory services

The Kent Supporting People Programme has made young people at risk, dual diagnosis, single homeless and families at risk their priorities.

The Medway Supporting People Programme focuses on 5 key objectives for housing support service provision. This involves ensuring that they are:

- Accessible
- High Quality
- Personalised
- Focussed on the greatest need
- User focussed

All of the above have an underlying theme of maximising value for money for the resources expended.

Any reduction in formula funding relating to the Supporting People programme will jeopardise not only current provision, but also an ability to respond appropriately to the additional pressures of an increase in population relating to the growth areas.

RECOMMENDATION: KCC and Medway Council continue to prioritise investment to ensure the delivery of Supporting People priorities.

9. Adapting homes to meet the needs of disabled people

With an ageing and increasing frail population across Kent and Medway, plus new challenges presented by issues such as returning servicemen and women, the demand for disabled adaptations to people's homes and subsequently for Disabled Facilities Grants has been increasing year-on-year in recent years.

A Task and Finish Sub-Group of Kent Housing Group (KHG) was set up in 2009 to complete an assessment of the current range of approaches and policies across the Housing Associations and local authorities operating in Kent, with a view to reaching a local agreement(s) in Kent on the future funding of disabled adaptations for Housing Association tenants.

The Group proposed that a shared approach to the funding of adaptations for Housing Association tenants should be tested in Kent. To achieve this all local authorities and major Housing Associations were asked to model the impact of such an approach on their budgets and expenditure over the last three years. This work is ongoing, however the Group has committed to developing a protocol across Kent and Medway which will provide a "level playing field".

The processes for administering disabled adaptations were previously set out in a joint approach document and the Group proposed that this should be updated and republished, with a view to improving timescales for delivering adaptations across all tenures.

KHG is already developing a protocol to ensure the provision of housing adaptations in a consistent manner and more effective use of resources across Kent and Medway. They are also looking at innovative ways of increasing the supply of affordable wheelchair accessible homes within new housing developments.

10. Reducing homelessness

Across Kent and Medway each local housing authority has its own strategy to deal with homelessness, which supports delivery of the homelessness prevention agenda. These strategies have common themes, including:

- Providing a range of accommodation for homeless households and maximising the supply of affordable housing for all households.
- Ensuring there is sufficient and appropriate support to meet the needs of various client groups
- Helping homeless households to secure and retain good quality accommodation
- Effective partnership working
- Tackling youth homelessness
- Improving access to private sector homes

As mentioned above, a key issue is youth homelessness and homelessness amongst households affected by the economic downturn. Kent Housing Options Group is currently assessing the impact of current homelessness prevention projects educating young people about the realities of homelessness and promoting it across Kent and Medway.

Kent and Medway Strategic Housing Market Assessment

1. Background

Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) are cross-boundary studies of the operation of Housing Market Areas. The Kent and Medway SHMA is the evidence base created to support development of this Strategy.

The specification for the SHMA details the requirement to draw together without contradiction or duplication the work that has or is being progressed at the District/Borough or area level, to be able to effectively describe a Kent-wide perspective. The specification was developed with planning and housing colleagues from across Kent and Medway. The SHMA was produced by DTZ.

The Kent and Medway SHMA has drawn on publicly available data and the information contained within the SHMAs commissioned by local housing and planning authorities within Kent and Medway, particularly in relation to evidence of housing need. The process also involved consultation with stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

The SHMA presents evidence for four sub-county areas: West Kent and Maidstone, Ashford, East Kent and North Kent. These areas are broadly consistent with the housing and labour markets within the County, though Maidstone is relatively self-contained, and correspond to the areas under the Local Investment Plans.

2. Population and Economy

The housing markets within Kent and Medway are driven to a large extent by changes in the population and economy. Over the 25 year

period 1981-2006, the number of households in Kent and Medway increased by more than one quarter. This suggests there is significant potential for demographic and economic change in the next 20 years.

Overall, the greatest growth in Kent and Medway is expected amongst single person and multi-person households (ie where the occupants are not related). A significant proportion of the growth in single person households will be driven by older people living alone. Many of these households will occupy larger homes despite their smaller household size.

There will also be a greater need to provide move-on accommodation and floating support services to vulnerable people who are moving from supported housing to an independent living situation.

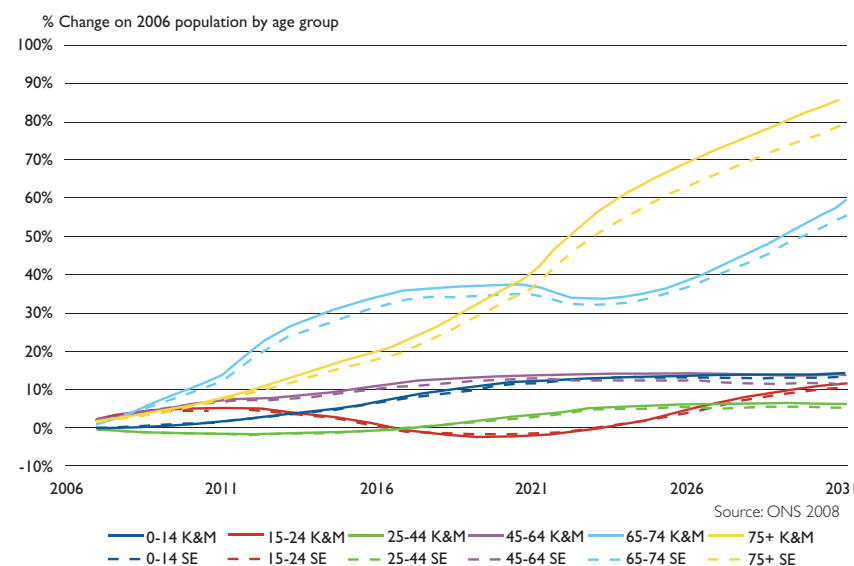


Figure 11: Forecast % Change in Population by Age Group, Kent & Medway and South East

It is also important to note that in all of the sub-county market areas, with the exception of East Kent, there are higher proportions of children (the 0-14 age group) within the population than in the South East as a whole. This suggests that **the market areas, particularly Ashford, where almost 20% of the population is aged 0-14, include attractive places for families to live** and that there will be continued demand and need for family accommodation in the future.

Kent and Medway have around 636,700 jobs - 17% of total employment in the South East, a share consistent with its share of households. This wealth generating capacity of the Kent and Medway economy is a key factor in earnings and household incomes which in turn drives housing demand.

It is important to acknowledge the influence of London on household incomes within Kent and Medway. The proximity of London allows some people to access higher paid jobs in the capital and boost their household income. Conversely, those who work within Kent and Medway tend to have lower earnings on average. This relationship and the unequal impact it has upon household incomes in Kent and Medway is likely to be reinforced in the future as Kent is 'relocated' closer to London as a result of dramatic improvements in rail accessibility through the opening of High Speed 1 services. This is likely to have a further impact on house prices in the rural parts of Ashford and Gravesham, making affordability problems more acute.

With respect to these two key drivers of the housing market – population and economic change - the SHMA identified two important issues that will affect demand and need in the future:

i The ageing population: Growth in the population aged 75+ is projected to grow by around 86% in Kent and Medway between

2006 and 2031 compared to 80% in the South East. A significant proportion will be living alone.

ii Household income growth and inequality: Growth in household incomes drives demand for housing, both in terms of the overall quantity and the size and quality of homes. Kent and Medway have experienced faster growth in resident earnings than the South East and London over recent years. But inequality in household incomes has increased over time as a result of changes to the structure of the economy and social change.

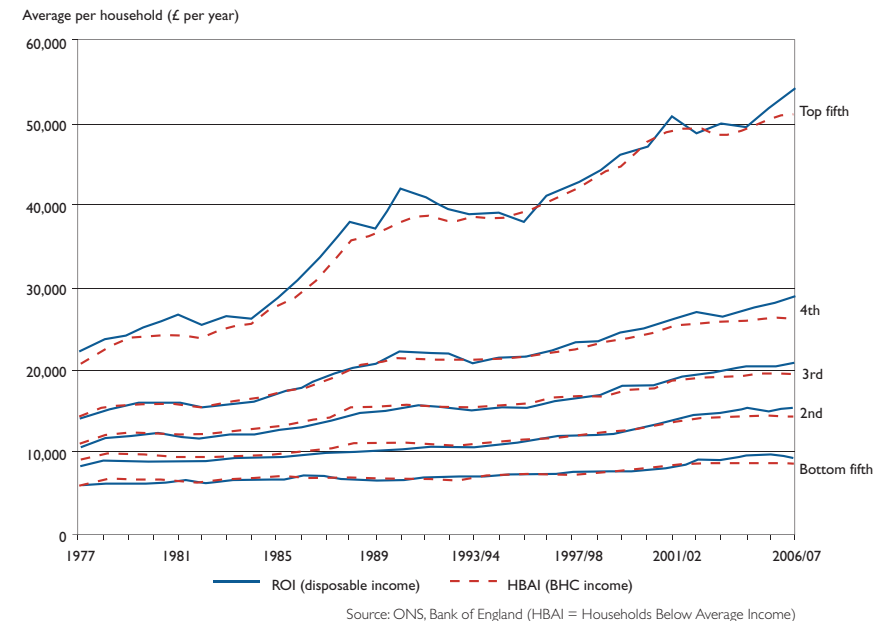


Figure 12: Average household income by quintile group in 2006/07 prices

3. Types of home

There are key differences in the type of homes across different sub-county markets within Kent and Medway but, on average, Kent and Medway has a lower proportion of detached houses than the South East. Only Ashford and West Kent and Maidstone either match or exceed the regional average.

A breakdown of net housing completions by size for 2007/08 indicates that the majority of new homes in recent years have been smaller properties. East Kent had the highest proportion of completions of small (1 and 2 bed) properties in 2007/08 (76% of completions), followed by West Kent and Maidstone (66%).

The nature of the land supply available in the future, in terms of location, size and type of site will also be important in influencing the type and size of product developed and the extent to which completions can be delivered in a changing market. Completions in recent years have, to some extent, relied on the development of flats, achieving relatively high densities on development land.

In general, North and East Kent are characterised by older housing, in line with the high proportions of traditionally older terraced properties seen in North Kent and the smaller sized housing that characterise East Kent, partly as a result of the subdivision of large terraced properties. In contrast, the majority of properties in Ashford are relatively modern – dating from 1964 or later. With the exception of Tunbridge Wells, West Kent's housing stock has a lower proportion of flats than the rest of Kent and Medway and is composed of predominantly detached and semi detached housing built between 1964 and 1995. Tunbridge Wells has the highest proportion of houses (45%) built pre 1919 in the County.

4. Land

The future land supply for each of the market areas provides a useful indication as to the amount of land available to support future completions, and therefore the capacity for future managed growth. Delivery in the short term will therefore be determined by the resources available to bring sites forward.

5. Condition

On the whole, there are limited number of social rented homes that are judged as being in poor condition and this can be attributed to the Decent Homes programme over the last decade which has targeted significant resources at improving the condition of public sector properties. It is now the private sector (largely private rented sector) where the majority of poor condition properties are found.

The majority of poor housing in Kent is to be found in the private sector, especially in rented properties. The worst private sector housing is concentrated in East Kent and Tunbridge Wells with higher than average levels of homes not meeting minimum legal standards (category 1 hazards) and up to 43% of homes being non-decent compared to the national average of 34%.

6. Affordability

Overall, housing prices across Kent and Medway more than doubled over the last 12 years, despite sharp falls over 2007/08. Combined with price rises over the long term, the pattern of income growth has contributed to **declining affordability of home ownership**. This is particularly acute in rural areas. DTZ expect that the proportion of home owners has peaked, although this may vary between individual

authorities, and the aspiration of home ownership amongst the majority of households is expected to continue.

Nevertheless, the private rented sector will continue to play an increasing role in addressing housing need and demand in the future whether households increasingly choose this tenure or whether they are forced to rent for longer until they find the resources to buy their own home.

Declining affordability has also meant that an **increasing proportion of households are unable to meet their needs** within the market, exacerbated by the declining size of the social rented housing in Kent and Medway and over the last 12 years.

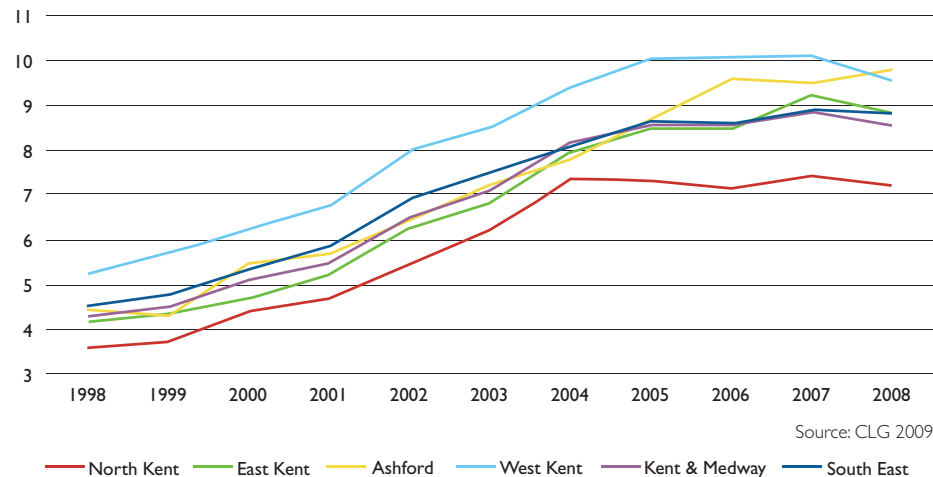


Figure 13: Ratio of Lower Quartile House Prices to Lower Quartile Earnings Ratios, 1998 – 2008

There are around 24,000 households within Kent and Medway who can be defined as in housing need on the basis of the criteria set out in the Housing Act 1996. This equates to just over 60% of the total waiting list figure for Kent and Medway.

6.7% of households within Kent and Medway are on local housing authority's waiting lists. Furthermore, this proportion has increased since the start of the decade when it was just under 4%. Whilst waiting lists are an imperfect indicator of housing need this comparison over time demonstrates that the pressure on local housing authority's waiting lists has been increasing over the last 10 years.

Collectively, the housing need assessments that have been undertaken across the County suggest that there is an annual need for around 12,000 additional affordable homes. The ability to address this level of need is constrained by the supply of affordable homes and Figure 14 shows that the number of homes has actually declined over the last decade.

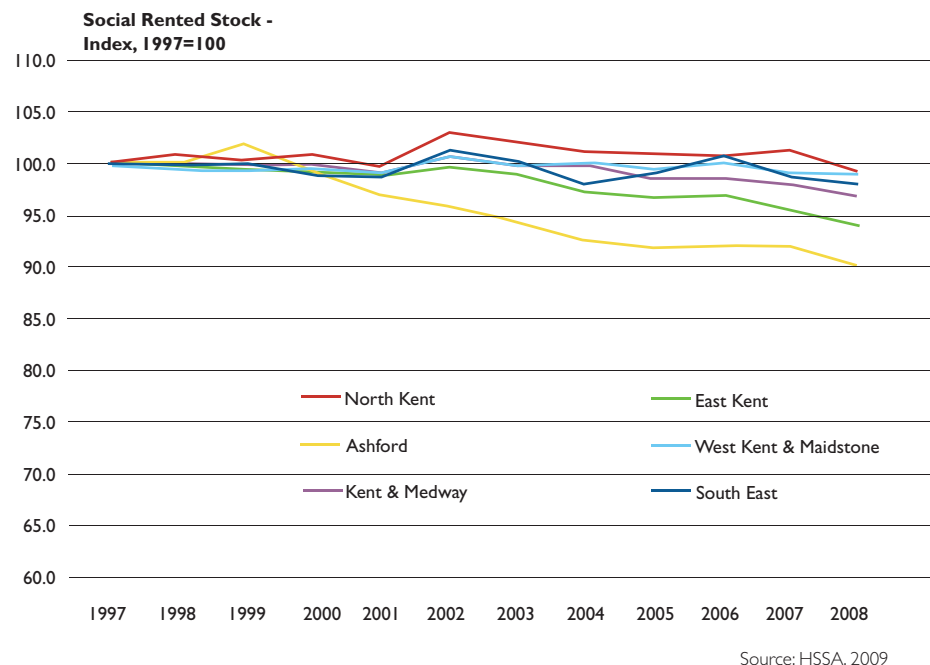


Figure 14: Indexed Growth in Social Rented Stock (1997 = 100)

The housing need assessments undertaken across the County suggest that the requirements of households in need are for around one third 1 bedroom homes and two thirds 2 bedrooms or more. Small properties become available for re-let most frequently, both because they are more numerous and also because households living in these properties are more likely to move. Similarly, larger properties are less numerous and, particularly in rural areas are more likely to have been sold through Right to Buy, and households living in larger homes are less likely to move. This exacerbates the pressure on larger homes in the social rented sector.

Around 5,200 households within Kent and Medway have applied for intermediate affordable housing products through Moat, the Local

HomeBuy Agent. In theory, there is a much larger intermediate market on the basis of household incomes within Kent and Medway. The majority (just under 4,000) are interested in all products available but 1,300 have registered to access intermediate rental products.

Intermediate affordable housing has been aimed primarily at households on the margins of home ownership, with an explicit purpose of extending home ownership to more households. However, there may be some scope for intermediate housing to play a greater role in addressing housing needs by helping local housing authorities and housing associations to free up social rented accommodation. 16% of households registered for intermediate housing with Moat who are eligible for the products available are already social rented tenants.

7. Challenges

The evidence presented in the SHMA reveals a number of challenges:

- i **The need to secure delivery** of new homes (market and affordable): Housing growth will be determined by local authorities based on local need and ambition.
- ii The imperative to achieve **regeneration and renewal**: The majority of poor condition properties are found in the private rented sector and in large concentrations in some parts of Kent and Medway. There are also a large number of empty homes that could be brought back into use. There are also large brownfield sites in need of regeneration with the potential to deliver new homes and jobs. This will be challenging following the downturn and limited public sector resources. Radical thinking is required to unlock key sites.

iii There is also the challenge and opportunity of **improving the energy efficiency of existing homes**. Whilst new supply is critical, even if delivered, the majority of homes within Kent and Medway that residents will occupy in 20-30 years time have already been built. The Strategy needs therefore to address the challenge of improving energy efficiency in mainstream housing.

There is the need to consider different dimensions of these issues and challenges with respect to vulnerable groups, who may need support services linked to housing, such as floating support, supported housing or move-on accommodation and to rural communities where affordability and delivery challenges are often more acute.

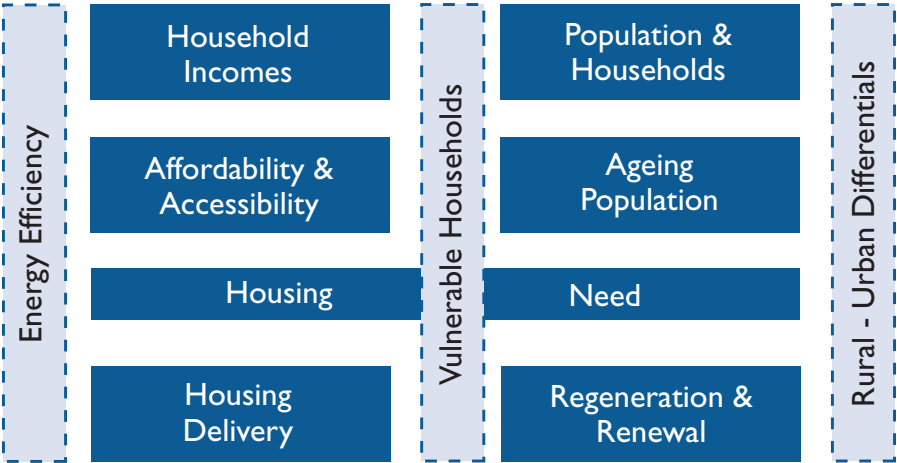


Figure 15: Key themes for the Strategy

Figure 15 provides a summary of the key themes that the SHMA has identified. Change in the size and structure of the population and economy within Kent and Medway impacts on the number of households, their make-up and their financial resources (household incomes). Outcomes of these changes include an ageing population, declining affordability of housing and significant housing need. Cross cutting these challenges are the specific needs of vulnerable households and different manifestations of the issues within rural and urban areas. The challenges highlight the importance of achieving housing delivery and regeneration and renewal and in doing so, improving the energy efficiency of new and existing homes.

Implementation

1. Governance and monitoring

The Strategy has been delivered directly under the auspices of the Kent Forum.

The monitoring of progress and updating of the Strategy will be directly reported to the Kent Forum. The implementation of the Strategy has been delegated by the Kent Forum to the Kent Housing Group (KHG). It is expected that KHG will work collaboratively across its membership to promote the priorities and deliver the aims of the Strategy. KHG will also work in partnership with the Kent Planning Officers Group, the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing), Supporting People Commissioning Body, Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy Working Group, Kent Highways Services and Kent Developers Group to ensure a joined-up approach to the monitoring of progress and promotion of delivery.

KHG will provide briefings to the Kent Forum on progress, highlighting opportunities for joint working on priorities identified in the Strategy.

2. Skills

Many of the recommendations made in this Strategy will require new skills, knowledge and behaviours to deliver successfully. Action will need to be taken to ensure that the many organisations, both public, private and third sector, to which the implementation of this Strategy will be entrusted, have the appropriate skills at their disposal to make this Strategy a success.

Some of these recommendations echo those made in the *Beyond the Crunch – Building a Stronger South East* Report and some are new, focussing more specifically on the skills needed to deliver on the five themes identified in this Strategy.

2.1. Skills assessment

There is an immediate, short-term, issue which will potentially affect the implementation of the recommendations in this Strategy. The recession, the consequent moth-balling of development sites and decline in new starts, and the general lack of confidence in the housing and finance markets, is impacting on the numbers of skilled housing professionals working within the housing sector. Redundancies have been a significant issue in the private sector over the last two years, there are now many significant job cuts planned in the public sector as an outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, and the number of new graduates joining the housing and development professions has also fallen.

There is already evidence that this is becoming an issue in the short term: in the medium to longer term, as markets recover, there is a very real risk that housing delivery will be held back by a shortage of skilled professionals, particularly at the higher level. Skills need to be preserved, and the best use made of those skills already within the system.

The implementation of some of these proposed solutions will require greater collaboration between the public and private sector and could potentially expose public sector bodies to higher levels of operating risk (albeit this is potentially offset by greater levels of reward being available

to the public sector). Public sector officers and Members need an appreciation of that risk in order to properly appraise the opportunity and to mitigate the risk accordingly. That appreciation requires a good understanding of some of the fundamental principles on which these schemes are predicated.

The types of new skills required include: financial appraisal; project analysis (to identify, measure and mitigate commercial risk issues alongside a true comparison of the opportunity cost and reward); effective negotiation skills; and taking advantage of redundancies in the private sector, targeting to recruit those with relevant housing and development commercial experience.

Given the demand for these skills will be mixed in terms of individual local authorities and may not warrant a full time post, this would lend itself to a shared resource potentially with an internal cost recharge to cover the costs of the post. Other training opportunities should be sought from consultants that are on Kent and Medway's existing framework panels.

Case Study 17 – Stanhope Skills Academy

As part of the regeneration of Stanhope in Ashford, Denne Construction has set up a site-based Skills Centre to manage training and employment activities. This Skills Centre has been accredited by the National Skills Academy for Construction and is the first UK accredited centre on a housing regeneration scheme.

The regeneration project involves the construction of 440 houses and flats and the refurbishment of 320 dwellings over a 5 year period.

The Skills Centre is located on site and is used for workshops, inductions and health & safety testing. The Centre offers a range of training and services, including apprenticeships and trainee placements, work experience, local employment through a Jobshop, site visits, workshops and school events, business support, support for migrant workers professional development and community engagement.



The centre achieved Constructing Excellence Demonstration Project Status in 2008.

Denne Construction Ltd

2.2. Sharing expertise

There are individuals with very specialist and valuable skills distributed right across Kent and Medway, many of whom have generously shared their expertise in producing this Strategy and have indicated their willingness to share their expertise further. To ensure this expertise is not lost, a means should be found to capture these individuals' details and specific skills on a database that is open to all to search.

Just as skills should be shared across Kent and Medway, so should examples of best practice. This Strategy has uncovered a number of outstanding examples of innovation from which other partners could potentially benefit. These can be found on the Kent Housing Group website.



Case Study 18 - Gateway to SusCon

The Gateway to SusCon project aims to provide skills, education and training in construction to 1250 participants in its response to the challenges of climate change and the use of sustainable resources.

Participants include the unemployed as well as current practitioners continuing their professional development. They have very different backgrounds in terms of education and experience, but share the desire to work in a more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable construction industry. The programme treats every individual as a unique case and a personalised Information Advice and Guidance support service is given to participants.

A comprehensive and inclusive curriculum covers areas such as Energy Efficiency and Low Carbon Energy Supply; Water and Waste Management and People and Communities.

The project engages with many construction companies and professional bodies to ensure that the training being developed meets their needs in terms of content, level and format. Courses are delivered by leading trainers from industry, commerce, and education and have been accredited by bodies including the RIBA, UKCPD and NCFE.

The project has received recognition by winning both the ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Award for the South East and the National Award.

Method Statement

This Strategy was commissioned by the Kent Economic Board (KEB), in response to the ambition outlined in the Kent Regeneration Framework. A Housing Task Group (HTG) was formed by KEB to direct the work on the Strategy, chaired by Neil Davies, Chief Executive of Medway Council, with membership from senior Kent and Medway colleagues.

Direct work on the development of the evidence base and Strategy began in June 2009 following appointment of Brian Horton as Strategic Housing Advisor by KCC's lead officer with responsibility for the Housing Strategy Robert Hardy. This was followed by appointment of DTZ's Chris Cobbold and Kerry Higgins to prepare a SHMA for Kent and Medway, with technical support on the development innovation and strategic responses provided by Sarah Whitney and Jerry Freeman from CBRE.

The views presented in this work are distilled from a wide ranging process of engagement and consultation with elected members, council officers, representatives of many of the other public bodies active at both regional and national levels, developers, house builders, and members of the KHG, JPPB and KPOG.

Three "Stakeholder Events" were convened, structured meetings of invited key individuals from the public and private sectors. Stakeholder Event attendees were asked to consider and debate both the issues that were identified in the work and the emerging responses. In addition, three parallel "Members Briefings" were hosted by KHG to test emerging evidence, conclusions and responses with elected members from KCC, Medway and the District and Boroughs.

Two public consultations on the Strategy were undertaken during 2010, first in May and then in October, following re-drafting of the Strategy post-General Election.

Further material has been developed in 'Task and Finish' and research work by a wide range of colleagues from the public and private sector across Kent and Medway, with particular support from Jill Pells and Rebecca Smith from KHG and Lesley Clay from JPPB. Drafting of the strategy was completed by Jo Purvis from KCC.

Glossary

21st Century Kent	KCC's wide-ranging spatial vision for Kent, produced by Sir Terry Farrell, which sets out its ambitions for the future.
Affordable Housing	Housing which is either for sale or for rent – or a combination of both – at below current market values provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Typically, it takes the form of social rented, low cost home ownership, or below market rent in the private sector.
Affordable Rents	A new form of tenure proposed by the Coalition Government which will allow Registered Providers to charge up to 80 per cent of market rent for new tenancies in the social rented sector.
Balanced Communities	Communities with a mix of tenure, income levels and household types, supported through appropriate infrastructure and community development initiatives and resources.
Beyond the Crunch	A study undertaken by CB Richard Ellis on behalf of the South East of England Development Agency examining the impact of the credit crunch on development in the South East.
Building Better Lives	A report by the Audit Commission examining the strategic housing function of local authorities.
Building for Life	The national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. New housing developments are scored against the Building for Life criteria to assess the quality of their design.
Business Increase Bonus Scheme	Coalition Government proposal to reward those authorities where growth in the business rates yield exceeds a threshold, by allowing them to keep the increase (up to a certain level) for a period of six years.
Business Rates	Payments from businesses and other occupiers of non-domestic property that contribute towards the costs of local authority services.
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment – the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space.
CBRE	CB Richard Ellis – global commercial real estate advisors that supported the development of the Strategy.
Co-ownership Model	A potential model whereby an individual occupier and an organisation such as a Housing Association or a private developer share the legal ownership of a property.
Code for Sustainable Homes	The national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes, which aims to reduce carbon emissions and create homes that are more sustainable.
Community Budgeting	Government pilots which will pool departmental budgets for local public service partnerships, enabling them to work together more effectively, help improve outcomes, and reduce duplication and waste.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	A planning charge which allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development.

Community Right to Build	Coalition Government proposal which will enable communities to take forward local development without applying for planning permission if there is overwhelming community support and minimum criteria are met.
Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)	HM Treasury-led process that allocates central government Departmental resources and sets budgets starting from a zero base (i.e. without reference to past plans or, initially, current expenditure), according to the Government's priorities.
Decent Homes	A national Government standard for social housing which requires a property to be warm and weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities.
Decentralisation and Localism Bill	Coalition Government proposed legislation which will devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities control over housing and planning decisions.
Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)	Government Department that sets policy on supporting local government; communities and neighbourhoods; regeneration; housing; planning, building and the environment and fire.
Disabled Facilities Grants	Grants issued by local authorities to disabled people to adapt their homes to enable them to continue to live there.
DTZ	Global real estate advisors that supported the development of the Strategy.
Energy Security and Green Economy Bill	Coalition Government proposed legislation to improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses, to promote low carbon energy production and to secure energy supplies.
Equity Release	A way in which older people that are asset rich but cash poor can raise money against the value of their home.
Floating Support	Service provided by the Supporting People Programme to help support vulnerable people who live in their own home but need help managing with daily life, such as those who have recently moved in from supported housing.
Green Deal	Coalition Government initiative to enable private firms to offer consumers energy efficiency improvements to their homes, community spaces and businesses at no upfront cost, and recoup payments through a charge in instalments on the energy bill.
Handy Van	Community safety scheme run by KCC and Help the Aged, providing free repair and security services for elderly, vulnerable or disabled people.
Hidden Homes Assessments	Feasibility studies undertaken by local authorities to establish whether their land could be used better for the provision of homes.
High Speed 1	The UK's first high speed domestic rail service, which runs between Kent and London.
Hills Report social housing.	Report produced by Professor John Hills on behalf of the Government in 2007 examining the future role of
Homes and Communities Agency	The national housing and regeneration agency for England. A non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

HomeBuy	The Government's range of shared ownership housing schemes including part rent, part buy and shared equity schemes.
Housing Associations	Not-for-profit organisations that provide social rented housing and low-cost home ownership housing to people on low incomes or in need of support.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System	A risk based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety caused by deficiencies within people's homes.
Housing Need Assessments	Studies carried out by local housing authorities to assess future local housing requirements, in particular in relation to affordable housing.
Intermediate Housing/Tenures	Housing at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market price or rents, including shared ownership and other low cost homes for sale and rent, which are provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
institutionally-funded PRS	Investment by private sector organisations into the building of new homes for rental to the private sector.
Joint Policy and Planning Board for Housing (JPPB)	A Kent-wide forum where strategic issues requiring joint working between health, housing and social care, can be raised and measures to address them, developed.
KASH scheme	The Kent Action to Save Heat Scheme, run by Kent local authorities and Creative Environmental Networks, which provides free impartial advice and information to people about the best deals for energy saving measures.
Kent Children and Young People's Plan	Multi-agency Plan for Kent working towards improving the quality of life and life chances of all Children and Young People in Kent.
Kent Children's Trust	Working group of the Kent Partnership bringing together social care, health, police, education, districts and other services to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
Kent Choice Based Lettings Partnership	A Kent-wide Partnership between local housing authorities and Housing Associations enabling people on Housing Registers to bid for available social rented properties.
Kent Commitment	Memorandum of Understanding signed by KCC and all district councils in Kent committing to working more closely together.
Kent Design Initiative	Guide that provides the criteria for assessing planning applications in relation to quality and design.
Kent Developers Group	An association of the owners of, and developers of, the main development sites in Kent and Medway.
Kent Economic Board (KEB)	Working group of the Kent Partnership with specific responsibility for the Economic Success theme of the Vision for Kent.
Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP)	A group made up of representatives from all Kent's local authorities, which supports the development of programmes to reduce both energy use and fuel poverty.
Kent Forum	A single body made up of democratically accountable representatives from across the public sector in Kent.

Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy	Strategy that sets out a series of objectives to help fuel poor households within Kent move into affordable warmth and to reduce excess winter deaths.
Kent Homechoice	The choice-based lettings service for all council and housing association homes in Kent.
Kent Housing Action Plan for People with a Learning Disability	Kent-wide Plan that has been produced in order to help the people of Kent who work in housing, in Adult Social Services and the District Partnership Groups to improve the housing options for people with a learning disability.
Kent Housing Group (KHG)	A Kent-wide forum which serves to represent the collective voice of Kent's housing bodies.
Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG)	A Kent-wide sub-group of the Kent Housing Group with a specific focus on homelessness and housing allocations.
Kent Partnership	The Kent-wide Local Strategic Partnership, incorporating key public and private organisations from across Kent. Responsible for the Vision for Kent and the Kent Local Area Agreement.
Kent Planning Officers Group (KPOG)	A strategic forum which brings together key planning officers from local authorities to consider Kent-wide planning issues and build consensus.
Kent Rural Delivery Framework	Strategy which sets out a new approach to tackling the challenges facing Kent's rural economy, communities and environment has been launched.
Kent and Medway Strategic Housing Market Assessment	The evidence base created to support development of this Strategy.
Kent Supporting People	Programme which helps vulnerable people in Kent to have a better quality of life by providing housing-related support services and helping them to move back to living independently.
Lifetime Homes Standard	A set of 16 design criteria that provide a model for building accessible and adaptable homes.
Local Area Agreements (LAAs)	Three-year action plans for achieving better outcomes, developed by local strategic partnerships to reflect the aims and ambitions contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Local Asset Backed Vehicle	A form of joint venture often set up to address development across multiple projects, most suited to mixed-use development.
Local Decisions: A fairer future for social housing	Coalition Government consultation paper on the future of social housing.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	A collection of local development documents produced by the local planning authority which collectively form the spatial planning strategy for its area.
Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)	Locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and businesses, which will play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs.
Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential	Coalition Government White Paper which sets out the Government's new approach to sub-national growth.

Local Housing Authorities	Authorities with direct responsibility for delivering housing within their areas. In Kent, this is the Districts and Boroughs and Medway.
Local Housing Strategy	Statutory document produced by local housing authorities setting out their future local housing priorities, including key housing issues such as affordable housing, homelessness and property condition.
Local Investment Plans (LIP)	Plans developed by housing and planning authorities in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, which set out local priorities for infrastructure to support economic and housing growth. There are 4 LIPs covering Kent: East Kent, West Kent and Maidstone, North Kent and Ashford.
Local Needs Housing	Housing that meets the housing needs of the local community and businesses.
Local Planning Authorities	Authorities with direct responsibility for delivering planning within their areas. In Kent, this is the Districts and Boroughs and Medway.
Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)	Non-statutory bodies that bring together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to work at a local level. Their main tasks are to oversee the preparation and delivery of the area's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.
Medway Supporting People programme	Programme which helps vulnerable people in Medway to have a better quality of life by providing housing-related support services and helping them to move back to living independently.
Mixed-use Development	Schemes which combine residential and commercial buildings on one development site.
Move-on Accommodation	Longer-term, settled housing that vulnerable people move into when they leave supported housing or temporary accommodation.
Move-on Toolkit	Guidance currently in production by the JPPB to help provide support and information for vulnerable tenants who move from supported housing into the private rented sector.
National Home Swap Scheme	Coalition Government proposal to enable all social tenants to mutually exchange their house with another socially rented house in the country.
National Landlords' Association	Independent national organisation for private residential landlords.
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training.
New Homes Bonus Scheme	Coalition Government proposal to reward local authorities by match-funding for 6 years the Council Tax generated by every new home they build or empty one they bring back into use.
No Use Empty	A Kent-wide initiative which helps to bring empty properties across the County back into use.
Open Source Planning	Planning Green Paper published by the Conservative Party prior to the 2010 General Election.
Overage	A sum of money in addition to the original sale price which a seller of land may be entitled to receive following completion if and when the buyer complies with agreed conditions.
Policy Framework for Later Life	Kent-wide strategy that sets out how people in Kent want to live their later lives and what they want from public and community services and facilities.

Private Accredited Letting Scheme	Accreditation scheme operated in Ashford, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks which aims to encourage and support landlords in attaining and maintaining good standards when privately letting their properties.
Public Land	Land owned by public sector organisations.
Purchase and Repair Scheme	Medway-based initiative which helps to bring empty properties back into use.
Regional Growth Fund	A new £1.4bn 3 year Fund that will operate across England to stimulate private sector led sustainable economic growth and employment.
Regional Spatial Strategy	Statutory document that sets out the spatial vision for a particularly region, including outlining housing targets for local housing authorities.
Registered Providers	All providers of social housing.
Retrofit	The installation of new technologies within existing properties to make them more energy efficient.
Right to Buy	Government scheme that enables social housing tenants to purchase their homes at below market value.
Rural Housing Enabler Service	Service provided by Action with Communities in Rural Kent that provides independent advice and support to Parish Councils and rural communities on rural housing.
s.106 Agreement	A legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act between a planning authority and a developer, which ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken. They tend to be used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing.
Savings at Home	Joint project between Ashford's Future, Kent County Council, the Environment Agency and Ashford Borough Council to help Ashford's residents save water, energy and money.
Secured by Design	An award scheme, run by the Association of Chief Police Officers which aims to encourage housing developments to design out crime at the planning stage.
Shared Equity	Scheme whereby a person buys a property using a low cost loan provided by the Government, which buys the Government a stake in the equity of the property.
Shared Ownership	Form of low-cost home ownership, whereby a person buys a share of their home and pays a rent on the remaining share.
Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK)	A KCC-based hub that looks to put citizens at the heart of innovation and service design.
South East Plan	The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East.
South East Regional Design Panel	Organisation established by the South East of England Regional Development Agency to provide independent, expert appraisals on the quality of design proposals for substantial development projects.
Stamp Duty Land Tax	A tax of between 1% and 4% that is normally paid when a property valued at more than £125K is purchased.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)	A cross-boundary study of the operation of Housing Market Areas.
Supported Housing	Accommodation provided to vulnerable people assessed by the local authority as being in need of residential care.
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)	A set of goals and actions for an area prepared by local strategic partnerships, which they, in representing the residential, business, statutory and voluntary interests of an area, wish to promote.
Sustainable Communities Protocol	Kent Housing Group initiative that aims to ensure that future housing developments within Kent meet the objective of creating long-lasting balanced communities.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	A method whereby local authorities can borrow against future gains in business rates to finance current development.
Taylor Report	Review carried out by Matthew Taylor MP on behalf of the Government examining how to nurture a healthy rural economy and ensure an adequate supply of affordable rural housing.
Telecare	Innovative technology project piloting the use of specialised equipment to help people in Kent with chronic diseases to better manage their own health needs.
Under-occupation	Where a household has decreased in size and their property is now too big for them.
Unlocking Kent's Potential	KCC's Framework for Regeneration. This sets out an overarching assessment of the key opportunities and challenges facing the County over the coming years emphasises the links between economic growth, improved skills levels, better quality housing, effective transport infrastructure and the need to adapt to the changing demands of a growing population.
Valuing People Now	Government strategy for people with learning disabilities which says that people with learning disabilities have the same rights and choices in life as any other person.
Vision for Kent	Kent's Sustainable Community Strategy, setting out how Kent partners will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the county over the next 20 years.



Regeneration Projects

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