

Canterbury District Housing Strategy

2012 to 2016



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You can also get this information in other formats, including Braille, large print, audio tape and other languages. Please phone Gary Peskett or Carol Wrate on 01227 862110 or email gary.peskett@canterbury.gov.uk or carol.wrate@canterbury.gov.uk

1. Welcome to our Housing Strategy

Welcome to the Canterbury District Housing Strategy which sets out our ambitions for the next five years. We have made great progress during the past five years in the face of massive economic challenges to the housing market. We are also experiencing huge changes in government policy. Public expenditure is reducing and the next five years will see significant shifts in the relationship between local government, the communities we serve and our partners. With imagination and flexibility, we believe that these challenges will present opportunities to benefit our communities.

Our Housing Strategy

- Re-states our Pledge for Housing and our community's priorities.
- Examines the interdependence between housing, the planning system and the economy.
- Identifies imbalances in the local housing market.
- Promotes better use of existing homes.
- Analyses the cost and affordability of buying or renting a home.
- Assesses the need for new affordable homes.
- Explains our preferred mix of tenures and property types.
- Considers the support needed to enable people to live independent, fulfilling lives.
- Quantifies known resources.
- Recognises the vital role of partners and seeks to influence their thinking.

The Housing Strategy does not deal with the overall number and locations of new homes. That is a task for the Local Plan.

Our Pledge for Housing

We will plan for the right number of homes in the right place to create sustainable communities in the future.

This pledge in our Corporate Plan is the core vision of our Housing Strategy. It was shaped by the views of our residents. We will make sure that plans are in place to provide enough homes to meet local housing need and the needs of our economy.

Our community's priorities

We are committed to putting local people at the heart of everything we do. Our residents tell us that a home they can afford is one of their top concerns. We asked people from a range of backgrounds and ages about their housing needs and aspirations. Their priorities are remarkably consistent:

- **People and communities**
- **Enough homes**
- **Homes that local people can afford**
- **Quality**
- **Choice**

The surveys and consultations that provided these insights are listed in Appendix A.

Related plans

The Corporate Plan is our major inspiration. In addition to the Housing Pledge, we aim to:

- Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work and
- Tackle disadvantage within our district.

The Housing Strategy and the Local Plan have very strong links. They complement each other, giving and receiving mutual support.

In developing the strategy we have taken into account priorities and issues set out in Kent-wide plans and national policies. *The Kent Forum Housing Strategy* has been developed by partners across Kent from the public, private and voluntary sectors and is reflected in our strategy, as is the government's Housing Strategy.

Making the vision a reality

We have developed an ambitious, wide-ranging action plan to respond to our community's priorities. We will focus on the actions that will have the greatest potential impact:

- Ensuring that the new Local Plan allocates enough land for the right number and type of homes in the right places.
- Increasing the number of new homes that families on the average local wage can afford to buy or rent.
- Encouraging the building of more family-sized homes.
- Improving the choice of homes to tempt "empty nesters" to downsize from family-sized homes.
- Reducing the number of excess winter deaths by improving the quality and condition of existing private homes.
- Managing the impact on the housing market of high numbers of young people studying and living in our district.

A wide range of organisations and individuals share our commitment and contributed to the strategy's development (Appendix B). We can only make the vision a reality with their continued support and we will build on our track record of cooperation with all sectors.

We have assessed the deliverability of each action. Much of what we want to do is complicated and many elements are not within our direct control. The greatest barriers to achieving our goals are the recession, restricted bank lending and public spending cuts. Our action plan is set out in more detail in Section 8.

Access for all

The council is committed to the Equality Act 2010. We want our services to be equally accessible to everyone, regardless of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexuality, faith or belief.

This Housing Strategy has equality, inclusion and access at its heart. It addresses the housing and related needs of the whole community, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized. We have tried to be flexible and forward thinking in our approach. Our Customer Access Review influenced the Housing Strategy and the consultation process, and is Appendix C.

We recognise that this strategy is not perfect. It is inevitable that the consequences of some of our decisions will not emerge until they are implemented. This strategy and its action plan will be monitored and evaluated for their impact and if any problems occur, action will be taken to deal with them.

What we've achieved so far

A summary of the achievements of the Housing Strategy 2005-2010 is in Appendix D.

2. About our district

Our places

Canterbury District is in East Kent. It includes the historic city of Canterbury, the coastal towns of Herne Bay and Whitstable, and many villages. Natural assets include 12 miles of coastline, three special landscape areas covering a third of the district and sites of international importance for wildlife. We have an amazing built environment, with a World Heritage site in Canterbury, numerous conservation areas and listed buildings. There is also a vibrant cultural life. This all makes our district a great place to live.

Our people

Canterbury has the largest population of all the districts in Kent. Estimated at 153,200 in 2010 and forecast to rise to 157,400 by 2026, an increase of 7.7%. Providing enough homes for the growing population is a major challenge.

90% of the district is rural, yet 80% of the population live in the three urban centres. The city has a young population. About 20% are aged between 15 and 24, almost double the South East average, because Canterbury is a centre for further and higher education. This contributes to lively urban life, but also brings some of disadvantages of a more transient population.

In recent years, Canterbury's population figures have been inflated by students, who tend to register their arrival with a general practitioner, but not their departure. 30,795 students studied at Canterbury campuses in 2010/11. Of these 23,276 were full-time students who are more likely than part-timers to originate outside the district and, therefore, need to find accommodation locally.

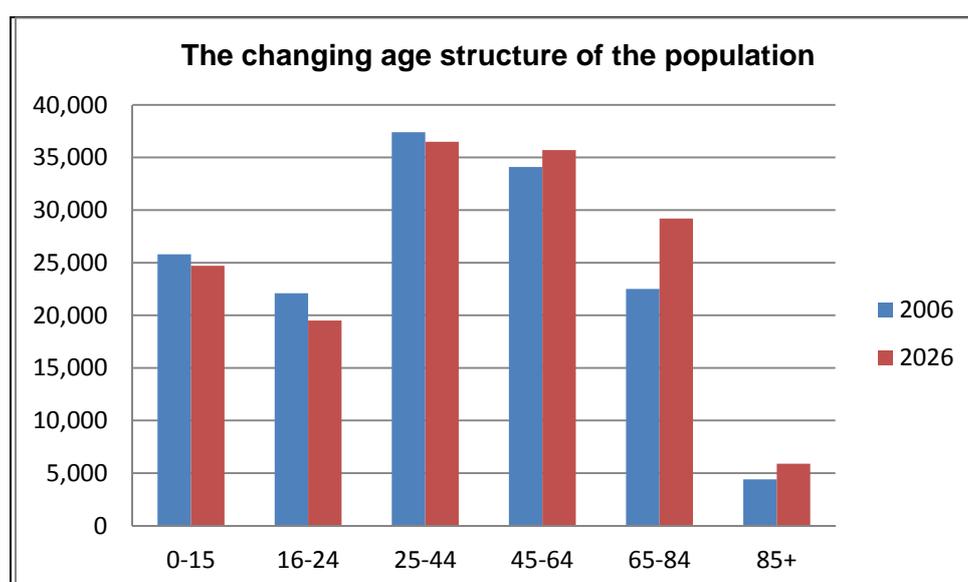
Table 1: Number of students in higher education at Canterbury campuses in 2010/11

	Canterbury Christ Church University	University of Kent	University of the Creative Arts	Total
Total 08/09	10,380	13,933	1040	25,353
Total 09/10	10,703	15,386	966	27,055
Full time 09/10	8,065	12,001	834	20,900
Part time 09/10	2,638	3,385	132	6,155
Local 09/10	4,514 (42.2%)	-	372 (38.5%)	-
Total 10/11	13,980	15,890	925	30,795
Full time 10/11	9,173	13,310	793	23,276
Part time 10/11	4,807	2,580	132	7,519
Local 10/11	1,834 (13%)	935 (6%)	141 (15%)	2,910 (9.5%)

Source: Universities

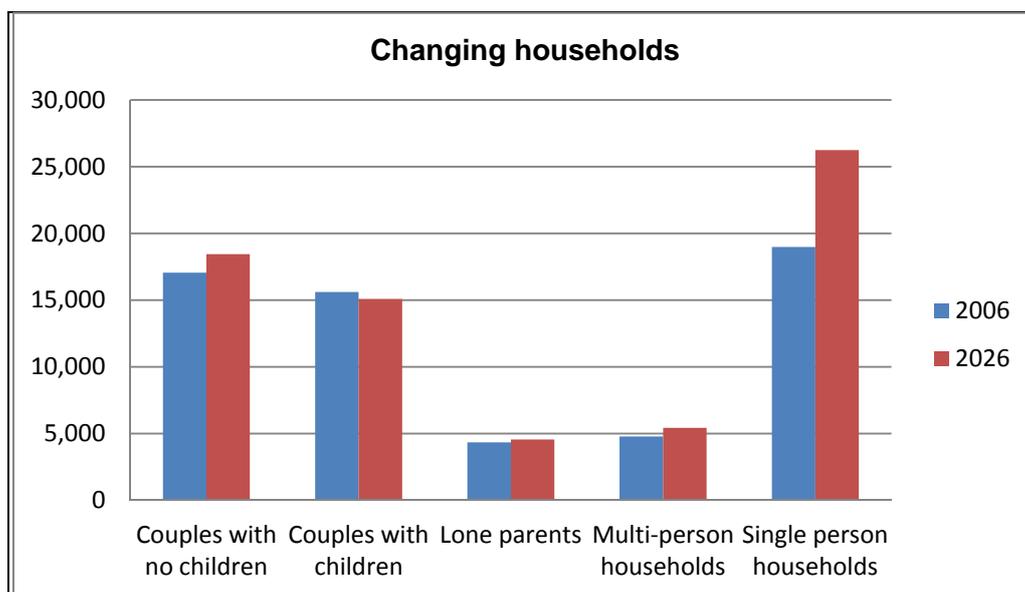
18% of people in the district are over 65, higher than the South East average. The number of older people is expected to increase, particularly those over the age of 85. 8% of people claim Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance and 18% of households have a limiting long-term illness, higher than the South East average.

Our coastal towns and rural areas have a high proportion of older residents. This can affect the vitality of rural life and viability of schools, post offices and shops. We want villages to remain vibrant communities, with opportunities for local people to live, work and raise families.



Source: ONS mid-year estimates

The size of the average household is 2.32 persons, but is likely to fall to 2.14 by 2026 when there will be fewer households with children. There will be 7,253 more single person households, mainly because of the ageing population.



Source: ONS mid-year estimates

Our diverse population

The population is predominantly White British. Black and minority ethnic groups (BME) make up 9.1% of the population (13,600 people), above the Kent average. A further 4.2% (6,200) are non-UK born residents of white origin, which includes people from Eastern Europe.

44% of the BME population are owner occupiers and 3.4% of social housing tenants are from BME groups, lower proportions than the population as a whole. 27% of BME residents live in privately rented accommodation, a higher proportion than the community as a whole. Many working-age BME people live in purpose-built student accommodation. These figures reflect the nature of their residence in the district as students or economic migrants.

The East Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment of 2007 (GTAA) estimated that 109 families lived in the district. 85% were Romany Gypsies. Most of the remainder were Irish Travellers, and a small number of Travelling Showpeople. Many families have historic local connections based on the rural economy.

Our economy

Canterbury is the recognised economic centre of East Kent. Our economy depends on the education, retail, hospitality and health sectors.

20% of the workforce is employed by the city's five further and higher education institutions. They face challenging times with reduced public funding and rising tuition fees. A further 20% work in other public sector jobs. Lower public spending will have a disproportionate effect on the district and 1,260 jobs could disappear between 2011 and 2015.

Canterbury's other main employment sectors are relatively low-waged in tourism and retail. High-value financial and business services that have driven growth in the rest of the South East are under-represented.

The closure of Pfizer's pharmaceutical plant at Sandwich will result in just over 2,000 job losses in 2012, with a further 1,250 jobs at risk through related multiplier effects. About a third of Pfizer's workforce lives in our district, which is likely to affect Canterbury's retail and service sectors. In addition, there will be an impact on local companies that have business links with Pfizer's. It is hoped that newly-acquired Enterprise Zone status at Pfizer's

Sandwich site, together with investment from the Regional Growth Fund will help to counteract this economic shock to East Kent's private sector base.

The city is well placed to take advantage of new opportunities. The High Speed 1 fast train service brings the city within an hour of London. However, we want to increase local employment rather than see major growth of commuting to London. Private education remains strong and the retail sector has been fairly resilient through the recession and is forecast to grow. The new Marlowe Theatre opened recently and the redeveloped Beaney Museum and Library is due for completion in 2012, strengthening culture and tourism. We are keen to capitalise on the presence of the universities to develop science and technology-based industries and boost average earnings.

Housing has an important role supporting economic prosperity. The Barker Review of Housing Supply (2004) concluded that insufficient housing affects the stability of the economy, the flexibility of the labour market and constrains economic growth. As our resident population ages, more homes are needed to attract economically active incomers. Failure to plan for this will result in eventual economic stagnation. This strategy supports economic prosperity by:

- Recognising that a ready supply of attractive homes of the right, size, type and tenure for key staff is an important consideration when businesses think of relocating to our district.
- Sending out the clear message that the district is pro- business.
- Providing direct employment in construction and building supply industries.
- Ensuring there are enough homes for:
 - Existing workers and industries.
 - Attracting skilled workers.
 - Retaining graduates educated in our universities.

Our earnings

Average gross weekly pay in Canterbury district in September 2011 was £512 per week (£26,624 per year), compared to a regional average of £556.

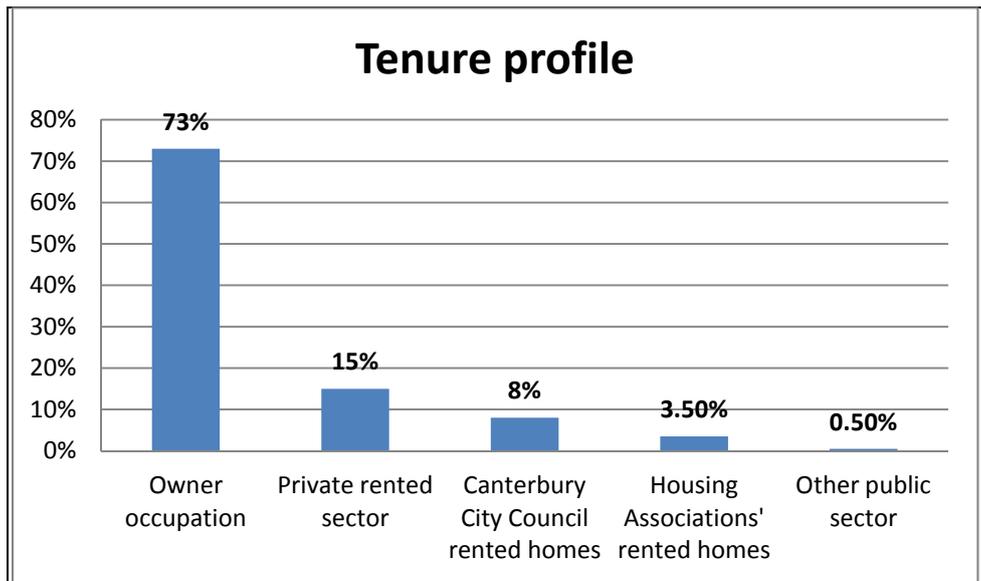
At the end of December 2011, 2.4% of people (2,451) of working age were claiming unemployment benefit: below the county figure of 3.2%. 18- to 24- year-olds make up 31% of all claimants. There are variations within the district. Unemployment is highest in Herne Bay's Heron ward.

75.4% of working age people in the district were economically active in 2009 compared to 82% across the South East. This may be caused by our large student population and by people retiring to the coast.

Low incomes limit people's choice and ability to afford a home, particularly first-time buyers and families with children. It restricts investment in the repair and maintenance of homes. The relationship between income and local peoples' ability to afford a home is discussed in Section 5.

3. The housing stock in the district

There were 64,070 homes in the district in April 2010. The graph below provides a breakdown of the housing tenures in the district.



Private sector housing

There are 56,410 private sector households, 88% of the district's total. 15% of private housing was built before 1919. Only 15% has been built since 1981, a lower proportion than any other comparable period of time. Most private properties are semi-detached (33%) or detached (38%) family-sized homes

Owner occupation accounts for 73% of homes, compared to the South East average of 77%. Our communities aspire to home ownership and we are keen to help them. We want housing associations (HAs) and developers to build more low-cost homes for market sale.

The private rented sector is comparatively large: 9,610 homes or 15% of the stock, compared to the South East average of 9%. Restricted mortgage lending is pushing many would-be first time homebuyers into renting, and the slow-down in the housing market has encouraged property owners to become landlords rather than try to sell.

Students and the private rented sector

The large private rented sector is fuelled primarily by the growth of higher education in Canterbury. In May 2011 there were 2,388 known student-only households concentrated in the city, 25% of the district's private rented housing.

This is a significant proportion of the city's dwellings. Student demand for private rented accommodation reduces the number of family-sized homes available for families and alters the character of neighbourhoods. This competition in the housing market contributes to inflationary pressures on rents and house prices, affecting the affordability of homes for the whole population.

The council completed a Scrutiny Review of the impact of higher education in 2006 and subsequently established a student landlord accreditation scheme and Student Community Group to mitigate the effects of concentrations of students on the community. It also encouraged provision of purpose-built student accommodation.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Large numbers of HMOs alter the balance of communities and contribute to concerns about community safety. Most known HMOs are in the city and occupied by students. The reform of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is likely to result in increased demand from non-students for accommodation in HMOs. The impact of benefit reform is discussed in Section 6.

A panel of councillors is undertaking a review into HMOs in March and April 2012. It will assess whether there is sufficient evidence for licensing, planning restrictions or other

operational responses to limit the number of new HMOs, ensure the quality and good management existing HMOs, and address community safety issues.

Helping to meet housing need

The private rented sector is the most accessible tenure and is a vital source of accommodation for a wide range of people. Reputable landlords are working with the council and the voluntary sector to provide good quality accommodation for people in housing need or with support needs.

Refreshing the private rented sector

Research shows that there is a demand for private rented accommodation, particularly among young working people. We would like to encourage investment in new market rent housing by HAs and private equity investors.

Council rented housing

Purpose of the council's homes

The aims set out in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRA) are:

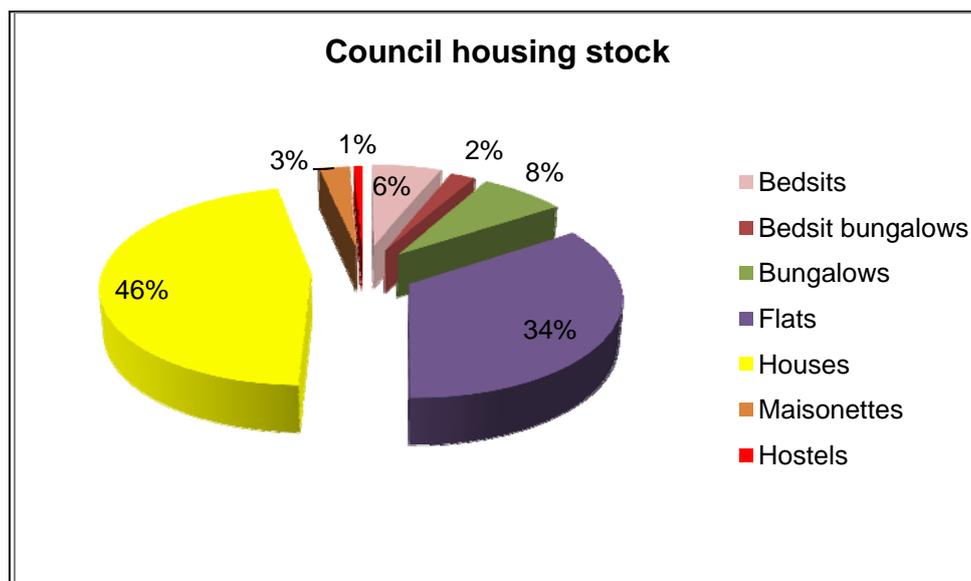
- To provide high quality accommodation which meets tenants' aspirations
- To empower tenants to influence service design and decision making
- To provide high quality, high performing and efficient housing services that meet the needs and preferences of tenants

How they are managed

The council's homes are managed by East Kent Housing, a joint landlord service for the 18,000 properties owned by Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet councils. In 2005 tenants rejected a proposal to transfer their homes to another landlord. The current arrangement ensures that the council still owns the properties, in accordance with the tenants' wishes.

Make-up of housing stock by property type

In April 2010 the council owned 5,208 homes, 8% of the district's housing. The number has declined because of the Right to Buy, resulting in a mix of tenures in communities. Most were built after 1945, and all meet the Decent Homes Standard. The chart shows the property types.



Source: Canterbury City Council Housing Annual Report 2010

There are 17 sheltered housing schemes, four of which provide enhanced support. These 580 properties account for almost 11% of the council's stock. Approximately 23% of the council's housing is designated for people aged over 60 years.

We estimate that around 20% of the council's family homes are under-occupied by older people. This is poor use of a valuable resource, when many families cannot afford a home large enough for their needs. Focus groups tell us that the small one-bedroom flats and bedsits usually offered by the council to older people do not meet their aspirations and changing lifestyles.

The council's tenants

Many of our tenants are in low-paid work or unemployed. 71% receive Housing Benefit, a figure which is growing. Council homes are invaluable for many families on low incomes. The tenant satisfaction survey of 2008 showed 81% of tenants satisfied with the service, rising to 97% among sheltered housing residents.

Tenure

After successfully completing an introductory tenancy, our tenants become Secure Tenants. The Government will give the council, along with all other Registered Providers (RPs), the freedom to grant fixed term, as well as lifetime tenancies to new tenants. This is intended to make better use of affordable homes, particularly larger properties. We want to limit disruption to the lives of families with children, and minimise the impact on community cohesion. The council, like other RPs, will have to publish its policy on tenancies. We have not yet decided whether we will use this new power, and we will consult widely before deciding.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

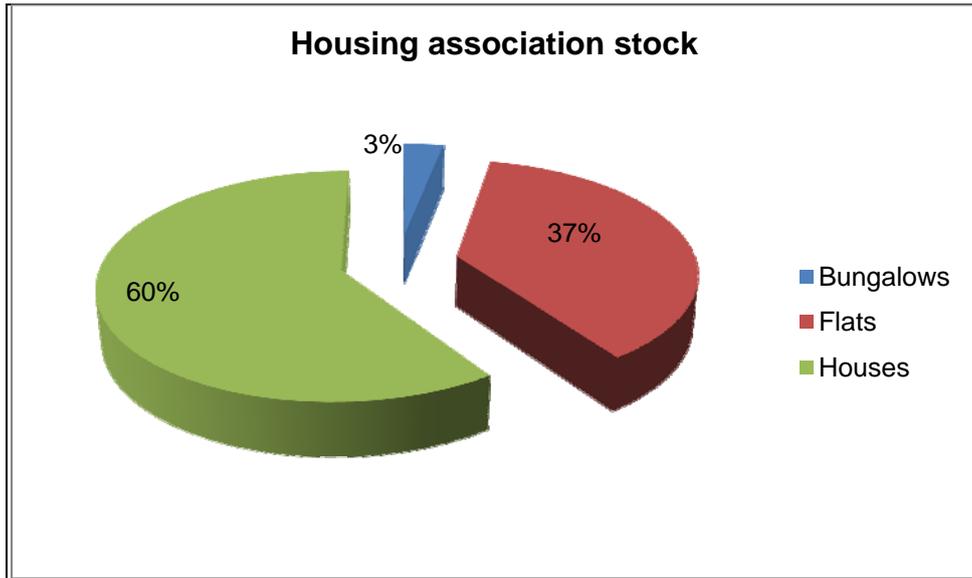
As a stock holding council, we have limited control over the way funds are raised and how much may be spent. 2012/13 will see the start of self-financing, which is a completely different way of managing the HRA. The current system requires the council to pay into a central pot every year. This will be replaced by a one-off payment to the government of £97 million. The council will have to borrow money to do this. However, the annual debt repayment is slightly less than the present arrangement. We have developed a 30-year business plan to manage this.

New council homes

In 2011/12, we built five new family-sized houses, part-funded with HCA grant, and are re-developing 44 sheltered properties for older people funded completely by the HRA. We are keen to build more council homes for rent, particularly family-sized houses. A study into the development potential of council-owned land will support this ambition. We have yet to decide whether new homes will be social rent or Affordable Rent. Everything depends on the continued viability of the HRA business plan.

Housing Associations

Housing associations (HAs) are the major providers of new Affordable Homes. 16 HAs own 2156 homes, about 3.5% of the total housing stock. The chart below shows the breakdown.

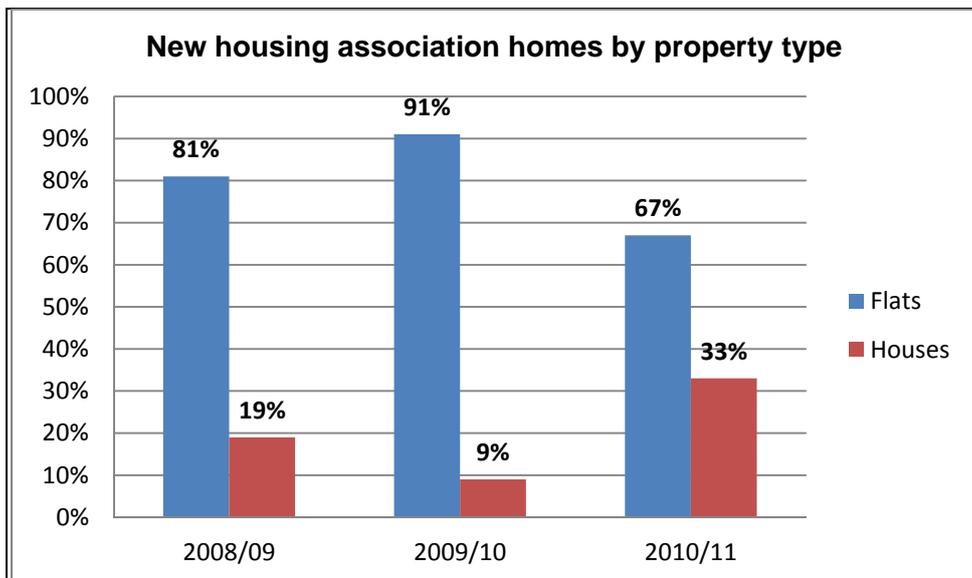


Source: CLG

We encourage as many HAs to develop here as possible. In 2005, Canterbury, Dover and Thanet councils selected four developing-partner HAs. The arrangement worked well until the credit crunch of 2008, when some partners could not build homes here, so it has not been renewed.

690 new HA homes were built between 2005 and 2011, 60% for social rent and 40% shared ownership. During the credit crunch some homes intended for shared ownership were used for intermediate or sub-market rent while waiting for mortgage availability to improve. Shared ownership is an important way to extend choice for people who aspire to homeownership and we want to see it expand. Most existing HA housing is for rent.

In recent years, most new Affordable Homes have been one- and two-bedroom flats. We are encouraging HAs to build more family homes, and to free up existing family homes in all tenures by building high quality accommodation that will tempt “empty-nesters” to downsize.



Source: Canterbury City Council

During the last two years there has been greater emphasis on small sites purchased by HAs wholly for affordable homes. They report no significant reduction in the price of land in the district, which prevented them purchasing more sites.

Most new affordable homes will be built by HAs. There are 152 new homes in our programme for 2011/12 and 81 in 2012/13 (which may change). The recently-introduced Affordable Rents will account for most new HA homes. The rents are much higher than social rent homes to enable HAs to borrow more capital, replacing HCA grant. We do not know how more borrowing HAs can afford. We will continue to work with HAs to ensure that Canterbury district attracts investment in new homes.

Housing association tenants

People become HA tenants via the same route as council tenants: the shared Housing Needs Register and the Kent Home Choice system of choice-based lettings. Therefore, tenants are of a similar demographic mix to council tenants.

Tenure

Most HA tenants are Assured Tenants and have lifetime tenancies. However, HAs may offer new tenants fixed term tenancies. They may also convert vacant social rent properties to Affordable Rent or shared ownership to support borrowing. However, we want to keep as many social rented homes as possible, because lack of affordable accommodation and low household incomes are a major local concern. We prefer income generated in the district under the new financial regime to be reinvested here. We will work with HAs to ensure that their policies take into account the needs of tenants and local communities. These concerns will be reflected in our Tenancy Strategy

Almshouses

Canterbury has a long tradition of almshouses, with at least 11 trusts in the district. Much of the accommodation is old, some dating from the 16th Century. It does not meet the Decent Homes Standard, and is difficult to adapt for people with mobility problems. However, almshouses often provide attractive accommodation in lovely parts of the district, particularly in the historic city centre.

We are working with three almshouse trusts to improve existing and build new homes, introducing them to HAs that provide development services and help with grant applications to the HCA. In return, trusts accept nominees from the Housing Needs Register and manage their homes to modern standards.

Almshouses are an attractive option for some older people who wish to downsize. We want to work with almshouse trusts to build on their strengths and enhance their role as a tenure of choice.

Increasing choice

The success of almshouses in the district leads us to believe that there could be a bigger role for other small-scale tenures such as co-housing, co-operatives and self-build groups.

Purpose-built student accommodation

Student halls of residence are an important component in Canterbury's housing mix because the high student population puts pressure on the housing market. The Student Impact Scrutiny Review recommended more purpose-built student accommodation. Table 2 draws together the available information on the accommodation occupied by students.

Table 2: Type of accommodation occupied by students in Canterbury

Type of accommodation	2009/10	2010/11
University accommodation bed spaces	5,763	5,763
Student-only shared households 2047 properties x 3.65 occupiers 09/10: 2388 x 3.65 10/11	7,471	8,716
Sole student occupier	342	362
Mixed households with all but 1 occupier a student	689	701
Total (significantly less than total number of students)	14,265	15,542

Sources: Council Tax records and universities

There is not enough university accommodation for all full-time students. Studies show that purpose-built accommodation is a good option for students because budgeting is easier. Universities set standards for construction, layout, management and maintenance. Students are protected from unscrupulous landlords and the managed environment reduces social effects on communities of concentrations of students. It eases demand on the private rented sector, which should mitigate inflationary pressures on housing costs and make more houses available for families.

The University of Kent has the most accommodation, with 4,316 bed spaces. It was granted planning permission for 495 study-bedrooms on-campus in 2011. Current projections are for a further 1500 units by 2012, with an additional 1500 by 2026.

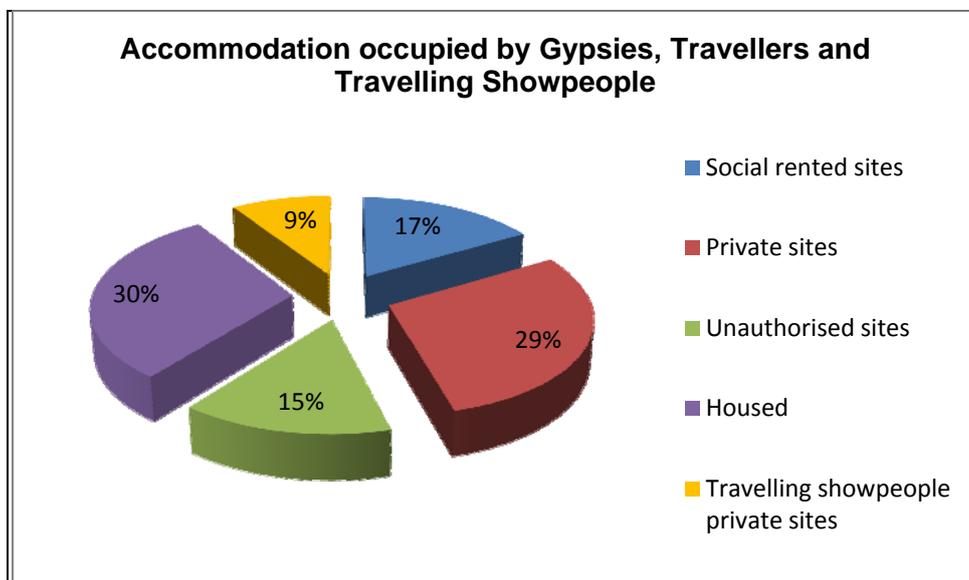
Canterbury Christ Church University does not have a large campus, but is expanding halls of residence on several sites in the city. In 2010, planning permission was granted for 997 flatlets plus 10 student family houses on four sites. CCCU currently proposes 450 to 600 more flatlets between 2011 and 2016.

This is a long-term solution, requiring significant capital investment by the educational institutions. It takes on average 3.65 student bed spaces to remove a single shared house from the private rented market.

The universities' plans may change. Higher tuition fees, restrictions on overseas students and the difficult economic climate may affect student numbers and the universities' ability to meet these projections. However, availability of student accommodation may become more important as universities find themselves in an increasingly competitive market for prospective students.

Accommodation occupied by Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The chart below shows the type of accommodation occupied by the 109 families living in the district.



Source: East Kent GTAA

The proportion of travellers living in “bricks and mortar” is relatively high, particularly in Canterbury. Many have opted for housing to provide a settled home for their families, with access health care and education.

66% of residents of private sites were satisfied with their sites. There was greater dissatisfaction among the residents of the site owned by Kent County Council (KCC). The main concerns were over lack of space and worries about flooding from the adjacent river.

Only two permanent planning permissions have been granted for any traveller pitches since completion of the GTAA in July 2007, one of which is conditioned with a personal permission. Temporary planning permissions, together with the two permanent permissions, have resulted in a net increase of three pitches to date.

Specialist accommodation

The district is home to a range of services and rented accommodation for people with support and other needs. Much of the accommodation is in older buildings that need updating in the foreseeable future. We will work with our voluntary sector partners to attract any funding that may become available to modernise accommodation and improve facilities. The need for housing-related support is discussed in Section 6.

The impact of housing on our health

Studies demonstrate clear links between housing conditions, life expectancy, mental and physical health. All the council's homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. HA accommodation is comparatively new and built to modern standards of space, layout and energy efficiency. The worst housing conditions are in the privately owned and rented housing sectors.

Condition of private sector homes

15,725 private sector properties do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. Putting this right will cost £60.4 million, an average of £3,841 per property. 3,714 vulnerable households live in these "non-decent" homes.

9,950 "non-decent" homes have at least one Category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and require immediate intervention. The majority of Category 1 failures are for excess cold. 2,290 of them are occupied by someone who is vulnerable. Most of these homes were built before 1944 and 66% are owner occupied. Private rented homes account for 44% of Category 1 hazards, but 92.5% of Warm Front grants go to owner occupiers. These resources need to be better targeted.

Fuel poverty

Overall, homes in the district are comparatively energy-efficient. The average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating is 54, with the average running cost of a dwelling being £734.23 (in 2010). Energy efficiency is worse in older properties.

8.4% of private sector households are in fuel poverty. Canterbury district has the sixth highest number of excess winter deaths in England and the highest in the South East. Research by the council and the Primary Care Trust found those most at risk are owner-occupiers in Chestfield and Swalecliffe. Fuel poverty, poor thermal efficiency and inadequate heating are the main factors. We are concerned about the growing number of older people who are asset rich and cash poor. A pilot scheme with the Estuary View Medical Centre in Whitstable is identifying people who may be at risk and sourcing appropriate advice and assistance.

Raising standards

We tackle poor housing conditions in the private sector through our Private Sector Housing Team and home improvement agency. Homestay provides advice and support on disabled adaptations, energy efficiency, repairs and maintenance to people who are old, disabled or on low incomes, assisting them to get grants or loans. The government's forthcoming "green deal" proposes a loan scheme for qualifying householders for energy efficiency and micro-generation measures. We will target all available resources to try and reduce the number of excess winter deaths.

Travellers' health

Social inequalities between Gypsies and Travellers and the settled population are striking, even when compared with other socially deprived or excluded groups. Travellers have

increased infant mortality, lower life expectancy and higher incidence of long term illness. They also have particular problems accessing education, health care and financial services.

Living conditions for travellers are among the worst in the district, particularly on the roadside or in unauthorised encampments, without electricity, water or sanitation. Helping travellers to find a settled home or site would make an important contribution to improving their health. The Local Plan process can facilitate this.

4. Making better use of existing homes

Existing homes must be used more effectively to:

- Respond to housing need.
- Reduce the necessity for new homes.
- Minimise use of greenfield sites.

Under-occupation

Many homes in all tenures are under-occupied while lots of families are overcrowded. We estimate that 20% of the council's family-size houses are occupied by people whose children have left home. If this percentage is applied to the 64,070 dwellings in the district – private as well as affordable housing – 12,814 may be under-occupied.

Maintaining and heating a large home on a fixed income is a major problem for many older people. We support a person's right to choose to remain in their family home or to move. However, it makes sense for it to be as attractive and as easy as possible for under-occupiers in all tenures to downsize. We want to improve the quality and desirability of accommodation in all tenures for "empty nesters" of all ages and ensure that they are supported through the worries of moving home.

Empty homes

1,941 homes were vacant in October 2010, 3% of the total in the district. 679 (1.05%) were empty for six months or more. The vast majority were private. 2.7% of properties in the South East are vacant, 0.94% for more than six months. Empty homes blight neighbourhoods and local residents cannot understand why homes are unused when so much time, effort and money are spent planning and building new ones. Persistent long-term cases are resource-intensive. In 2009 the council decided to re-focus limited resources on homelessness prevention.

We are particularly concerned about the number of long-term empty homes. However, our data may be distorted by the inclusion of some second homes and holiday homes. An in-depth electoral canvass is being undertaken in 2012, which will enable us to reassess the scale of the problem and enable us to determine whether additional action is warranted.

Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Act requires us to publish a Tenancy Strategy that explains our approach to certain matters. HAs and the council's landlord service have to pay due regard to the Tenancy Strategy in their policies regarding:

- The kinds of tenancies they grant.
- The circumstances in which they will grant a particular type of tenancy.
- The lengths of fixed term tenancies.
- The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy at the end of an existing tenancy.

The Tenancy Strategy enables us to influence the tenancies HAs offer and how they manage their homes. It will promote better use of existing homes by addressing under-occupation, and seeking alternatives for tenants whose income has risen. We are working with the Kent Housing Group for a Kent-wide Tenancy Strategy to provide consistency for HAs working in more than one district. However, there may be some district-specific issues that will need to be incorporated.

Detection of tenancy fraud

We want affordable homes to be available to those people who need them most. We are committed to rooting out unlawful subletting of affordable housing which prevents families from getting the homes they need. It amounts to fraud and causes friction in the community. Recent government consultation proposes criminalizing tenancy fraud. The council has agreed a robust tenancy fraud policy with its tenants. A consistent policy among all social landlords will enhance its effectiveness and will be addressed in the Tenancy Strategy.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding is a major problem. According to the housing needs survey, 694 households on the Housing Needs Register are overcrowded, and a further 435 concealed households are living with friends and relatives. Unfortunately, the council has few large family-sized homes and HAs are finding it difficult to build homes with more than three bedrooms under the Affordable Rent regime. So, large families rely on the private rented sector. However, changes to the LHA system, limiting payments to the rate for a four-bedroom home, will affect their ability to afford suitable accommodation. This is discussed in Section 6. Making better use of existing homes will help to tackle the overcrowding of many families.

5. The local housing market: costs and affordability

This section analyses property prices and rents in relation to household incomes to assess the affordability of homes in different tenures. Understanding our housing market is vital to achieve a better balance between housing supply and demand. The high cost of a home is a major local issue. It dominates peoples' choices about the tenure, size, type, location and quality of their home. It has a significant bearing on the composition, character and sustainability of communities.

Buying a home

Market trends

The number of property transactions was 2,049 in 2010, half the 2007 peak. Detached and semi-detached houses each account for 30% of sales. Flats are 17% of transactions because of several apartment developments on brownfield city centre sites. New home starts have fallen dramatically.

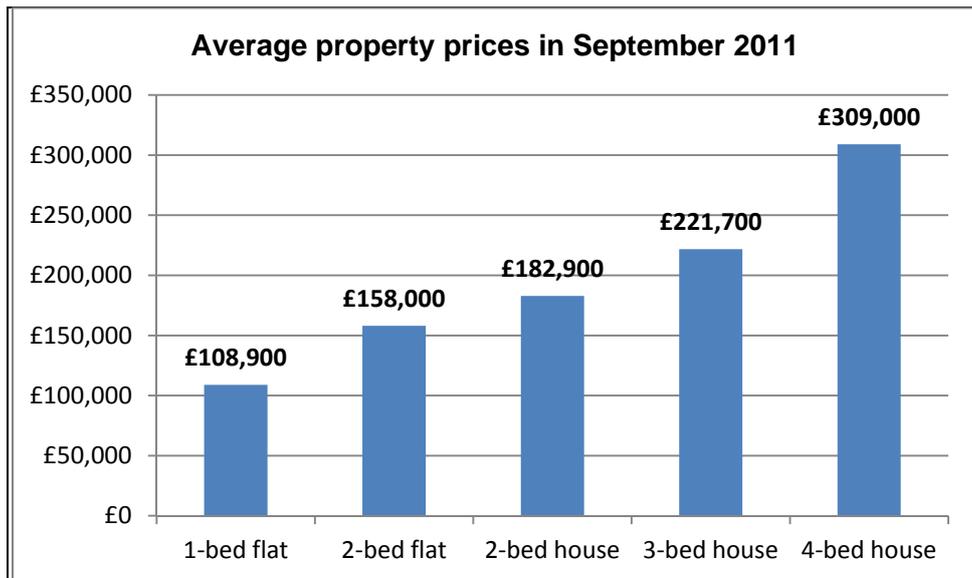
Mortgage availability

The situation is very difficult for first-time buyers. According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders, first-time buyers pay an average deposit of £25,000. Our research among people aged 18 to 30 years reveals that only 29% are saving for a deposit. By September 2010, the average age of a first-time buyer without parental financial assistance was 37. The National Housing Federation predicts this will soon rise to 43. In its 2011 Housebuilders' Survey, estate agent Knight Frank identified lack of mortgage finance as the single greatest threat to the new homes sector, closely followed by interest rate rises and weak economic growth. 39% of builders surveyed want subsidised mortgages for first-time buyers.

Mortgage finance for first-time buyers is the key to restoring vitality to the housing market. Research shows that each first-time buyer unlocks a chain of four additional transactions. We are very interested in participating in the Kent Local Authority mortgage indemnity scheme to support first-time buyers and the housing market.

Property prices

In September 2011 the average house price in the district was £230,700, compared to £223,000 in 2007. The low number of transactions may distort this figure. The graph shows the average cost of a home in the district according to size and type.



Source; Hometrack

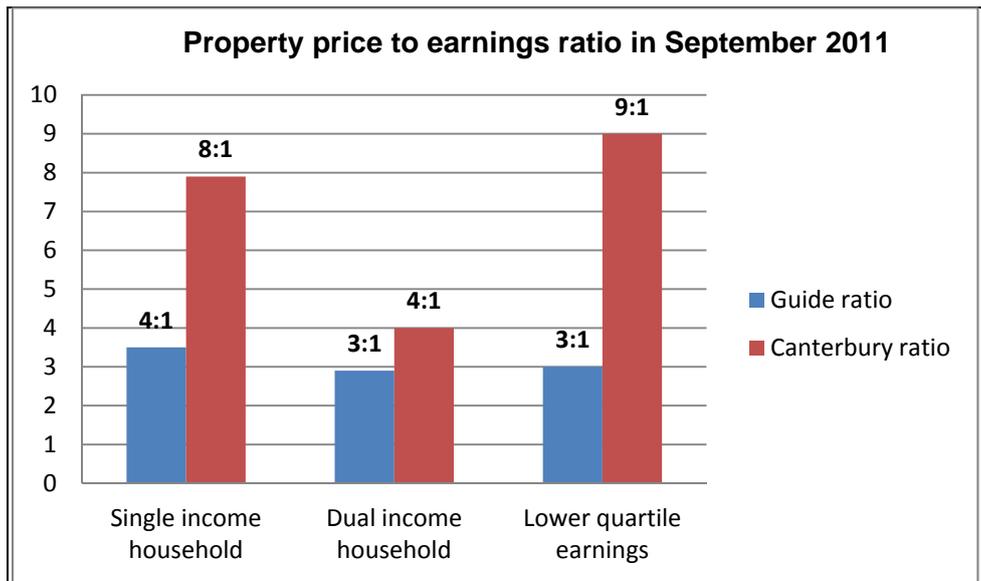
Property prices are on average £33,000 higher than neighbouring districts. Inflationary pressures on local property prices include:

- The city's role as an economic centre.
- The demand by landlords for student lets.
- The popularity of Whitstable for second homes and retirement.
- The "Canterbury Standard", Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, increases the cost of new homes by about £7,000. The scheduled adoption of Code Level 5 in 2013 will add further costs.
- The High Speed 1 rail service may attract wealthy commuters from London.

Prices vary within the district. Canterbury city, Whitstable and rural areas are the most expensive: Herne Bay is cheapest. The cost of buying an average 2-bedroom home is £169 per week (assuming an 85% mortgage at 3.45% interest).

Property prices compared to earnings

A home in the cheapest 25% of properties (known as lower quartile) costs nine times lower quartile earnings. Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) guidance recommends that for a market property to be affordable, it should cost no more than 3.5 times the gross household income for a single-earner household or 2.9 times the gross household income for a dual-income household. Local house price-to-earnings ratios show that single-earner households and people on low incomes cannot afford to buy a home (see the chart below). 52% of first-time buyers are priced out of the market, illustrating how unaffordable market housing has become for many local people. There is a clear need for more low cost market homes.



Source: Hometrack

The cost of shared ownership

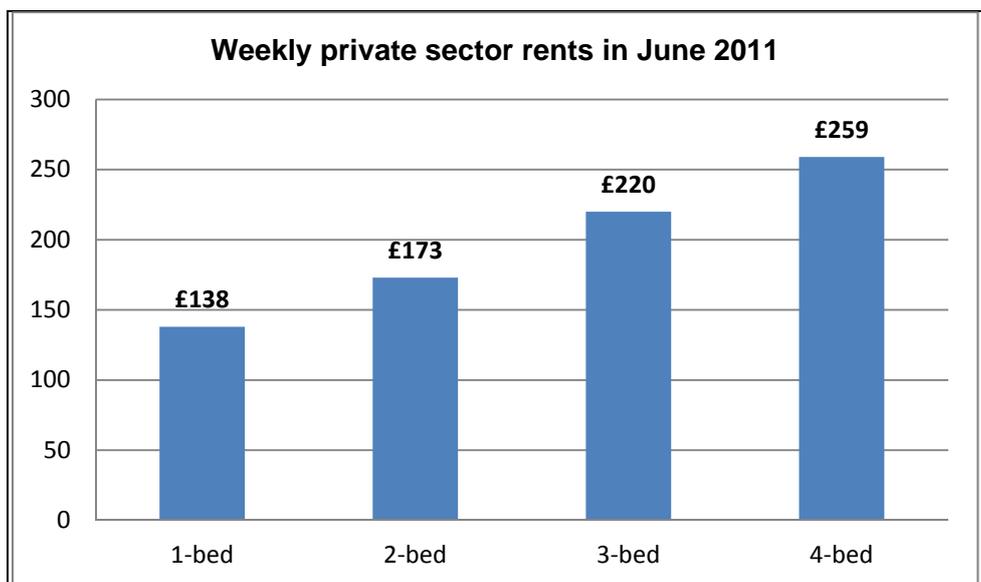
Shared ownership homes mainly help first-time buyers onto the property ladder. Lenders currently require deposits between 5% and 25%, with 10% the most common figure. None lend more than five times applicants' joint incomes, with many well below this figure.

The inclusive mortgage and rent for a 25% share in a new one-bedroom home averages £130 per week, with a minimum income required of £18,000 per household. The same share in a three-bedroom resale home costs from £138 per week. A new property costs £216 per week. Purchasers must have a household income between £20,750 and £34,000 per year.

Shared ownership is affordable for people on our average gross weekly income. However, our research indicates that few people are aware of it. We believe there are opportunities for more shared ownership homes, perhaps as the basis of a local key worker scheme to support Canterbury's knowledge economy.

The private rented sector

The average rent for a 2-bedroom property is £173 per week, over £20 higher than neighbouring districts. Shelter's "Private Rent Watch" Report of October 2011 categorised rents in our district as "very unaffordable".



Source: Hometrack

SHMA guidance states that an affordable market rent should not exceed 25% of gross household income. 25% of average gross weekly pay of £512 is £128. On this basis, nothing is affordable. However, the costs are comparable with shared ownership. The private rented sector is very accessible and provides a home for many young people and low income families. High rents mean that many potential first-time buyers cannot afford to save for a deposit for a shared ownership or market home.

The student rented market

Private sector student rents

The private rented sector is the largest source of accommodation for students. However, they are competing with local residents. This demand has an inflationary effect on rent levels in the market, with consequences on affordability for the whole population.

Many students live in shared houses (HMOs), paying rents between £75 and £85 per week per person. This is higher than many local young people can afford, particularly those in receipt of housing benefit.

Purpose-built student accommodation

Accommodation in halls of residence costs between £89 and £180 per week, depending on size and facilities.

Council rents

Existing council homes are the cheapest rented accommodation in the district, with an average rent of £78.20 per week in 2011/12. This will increase to £84.00 in 2012/13. It has been a long-term government aim for council rents to converge with HA rents. We would like to build more council homes, finances permitting, but rents of these properties will be much higher. The target rents for our new houses are £110 per week for three bedrooms and £129 for four bedrooms.

In future, the council may be able to build homes for Affordable Rent at up to 80% of market rents. This places the council on the same footing as HAs. Affordable Rent is less affordable for low income families, and may make some families dependent on Housing Benefit.

Housing association rents

Social rent

The average rent for a housing association home in the district is £86.82 per week, more expensive than a council property but considerably cheaper than the private rented sector.

Affordable Rent

New homes developed by HAs will be Affordable Rent. The rent will be up to 80% of gross market rents, including service charges, or pegged to LHA rates, whichever is lower. The maximum rent is assessed according to the individual characteristics of the property. Research by Hometrack in February 2011 revealed that households will need an income of £26,500 per year to pay Affordable Rent in the South East. Low income households will rely on Housing Benefit.

6. Housing needs

The total number of homes needed

The South East Plan set a target of 10,200 new homes between 2006 and 2026 of all types and tenures. Its abolition means that the council must decide how many new homes to plan for. This will be an important part of the new Local Plan.

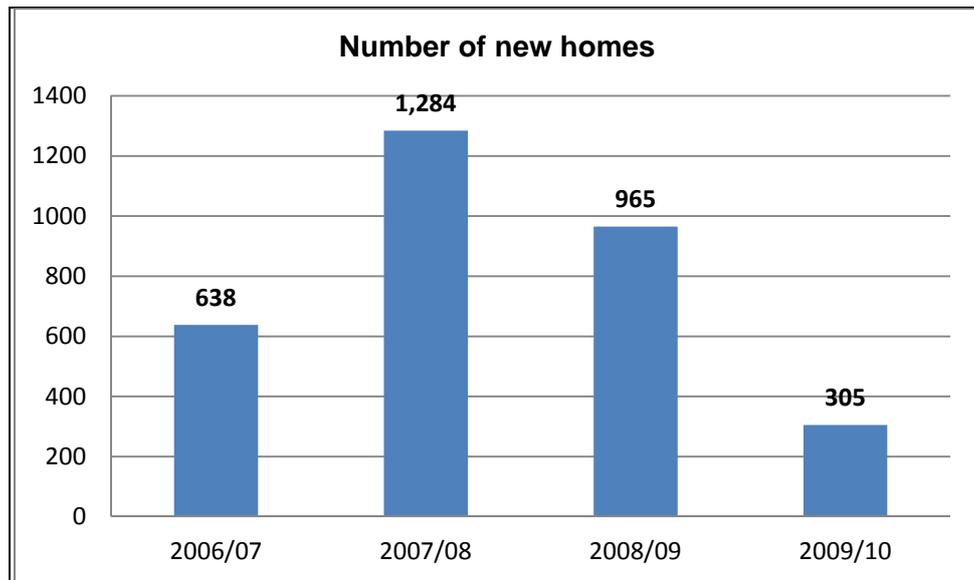
Localism

Changes to the planning system will give communities a greater say in the amount of development in their locality. The need for more homes at a price local people can afford was one of the top issues identified by the Residents Survey of 2011, particularly for young

families. We will work with communities to explore these tensions and ensure that the full implications of development are understood to enable informed decision-making.

Housing completions

Between 2006 and March 2010 3,192 new homes were built in all tenures, including 480 affordable homes. The number of new homes completed fell drastically in 2009/10, because of the credit crunch. The recession and tighter mortgage lending criteria have had a negative effect on the number of new homes started. This has important implications for our ability to meet the housing needs of our growing population and contributes to comparatively high house prices.



Source: CLG

Land supply

A supply of developable land is vital to ensure enough new homes to meet housing needs. The district has an identified supply of land and planning permissions granted but not yet built for 3,480 homes.

The quality of our landscape, the historic built environment and flood risks mean that large parts of the district are subject to planning constraints that limit opportunities for building new homes. The Canterbury District Local Plan (adopted in 2006) prioritises previously developed land in preference to greenfield sites. Most significant brownfield sites have now been redeveloped. We are evaluating sites proposed for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which will provide part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan.

Developing council-owned land

We will review the development potential of council land, particularly HRA-owned sites. Studies have been completed in Herne Bay and parts of Canterbury. Thus far development opportunities are modest. We aim to:

- Contribute to the overall development capacity of the district.
- Support the Local Plan, Corporate Plan and Economic Development Strategy.
- Identify opportunities for new homes in any tenure.
- Potentially reduce the need for Greenfield development sites.
- Identify possibilities for more efficient use of existing low density housing or commercial sites by remodelling or redevelopment.

Our development priorities

Our development priorities are explained in the Local Investment Plan (LIP: Appendix E). The anticipated outputs now seem optimistic in the light of reduced development activity and

government spending cuts. However, the housing-specific projects and smaller affordable housing sites are still realistic and remain the core of our programme.

New affordable homes

Many new HA homes should be built as developer contributions under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. We expect 35% of new homes to be affordable on sites above a certain size. Overall, we have only achieved about 22% and we must do better. We will:

- Improve internal arrangements for negotiating s.106 agreements.
- Take a robust approach to planning applications that just slip under the threshold for affordable housing.
- Consider reducing the threshold, as recommended by the SHMA.
- Be more open to accepting commuted sums for new homes to be provided elsewhere.
- Adopt a formula for calculating commuted sums to ensure transparency and consistency.
- Consider cross-subsidy of tenures on sites in rural areas to improve financial viability and provide an incentive to landowners.
- Review the Developer Contribution Supplementary Planning Document through the Local Plan process.

There are proposals to include contributions for affordable housing in the new Community Infrastructure Levy. We are assessing the implications.

High quality new homes

We want to create neighbourhoods with homes of the highest standards where people desire to live.

Quality design

We are participating in the review of the Kent Design Guide and reviewing our own policies through the Local Plan process.

Caring for our environment

The council adopted the “Canterbury Standard” to reduce the environmental impact of new development. It accelerated the national timetable for sustainable construction, which has since been scrapped by the government. Since April 2010 all new residential proposals must achieve Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. From 1st April 2013 they should Code Level 5. Higher environmental standards, though desirable, increase the cost of new homes and may affect their financial viability. Our local policy may need to be reviewed in the light of changes to national policy, while ensuring the environment is protected.

Accessibility

All new homes granted planning permission under Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 meet the Lifetime Homes standard. The Developer Contributions SPD currently requires 20% of affordable housing to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard. We will investigate whether there should be a common requirement for all tenures through the Local Plan process.

Space standards

All affordable homes meet HCA standards for internal space, amenity, layout and design. No similar standards exist for the private sector. We are worried that some modern homes are not large enough to meet the long-term needs of the inhabitants. The Greater London Authority gave a lead by developing its own space standards. This has cost implications, but is counterbalanced by avoiding premature obsolescence of new homes and enabling occupiers to enjoy better quality of life. We will consider developing a planning policy on this matter.

The need for affordable homes

There is significant unmet need for homes local people can afford because of high housing costs and low incomes. Evidence comes from several sources. Information on the need for affordable homes is provided by the housing needs survey in the SHMA. This is supported by data about the number of households on the Housing Needs Register, registrations for shared ownership homes, homelessness applications, rough sleeper counts, rural housing needs surveys and the East Kent GTAA.

The Housing Needs Survey

The survey suggests we need 1104 new affordable homes every year. This is a big increase since the last study in 2004, when 766 affordable homes were needed annually. The calculation is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Housing needs calculation

Element	Households
A. Backlog of existing need	3,248
B. Annual reduction of backlog over 10 years (A÷10)	325
C. Total newly arising housing need	1,276
D. Annual Supply of Affordable Units (current + 10%)	497
E. Net annual need for new affordable homes (B+C-D)	1,104

Source: East Kent SHMA 2009

Backlog of housing need

The backlog of existing need (Table 3, Line A) counts households who lack their own homes or live in unsuitable accommodation and cannot afford market housing. This includes homeless people, concealed and overcrowded households and those living in unfit accommodation. It was calculated as follows:

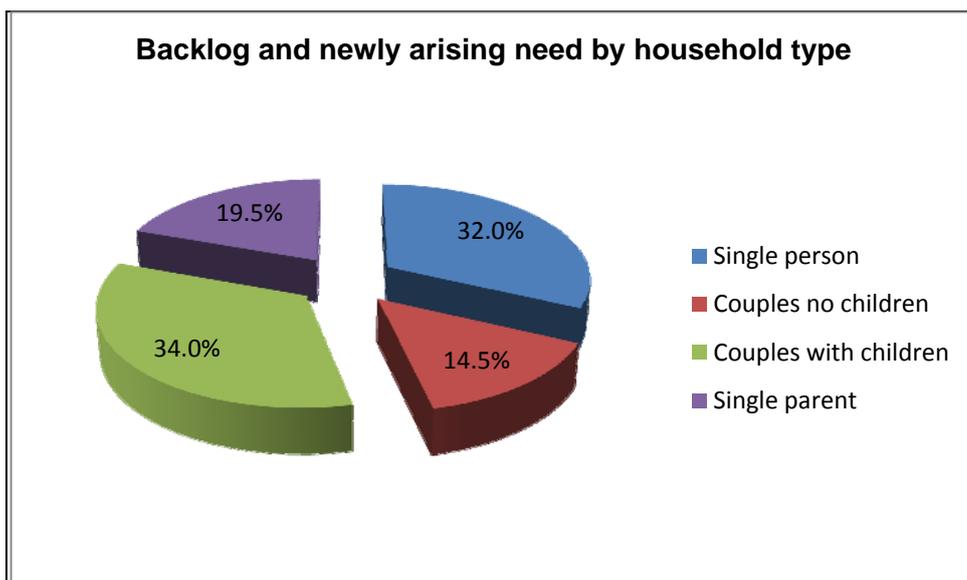
Table 4: Components included in calculation of backlog of existing housing need

Component	Households	Data sources
Homeless households	253	P1e average over 3 years from 2004/05 to 2006/07
Overcrowded households	694	Housing Needs Register
Concealed households	435	Extrapolated from Kent population figures
Unfit private dwellings	1,869	HSSA 2005/06
Other groups	41	CoRE data 2007/08
Total current housing need	3,292	
Minus current occupiers of affordable housing	44	CoRE data 2007/08
Backlog need	3,248	

Source: East Kent SHMA 2009

The types of new affordable homes needed

Existing affordable homes meet only 23% of housing needs. 53.5% of those in housing need are families with children and there is a severe shortage of three- and four-bedroom family homes. There are a lot of small households too, but they have better opportunities to find a home than families with children because small homes are more numerous.



Many affordable homes built in recent years have been one- and two-bedroom flats. The SHMA recommends that families with children should live in houses, rather than flats. Therefore, the supply needs to be rebalanced towards family houses as set out in Table 5.

Table 5: Recommended property types for new affordable homes

Property type	Annual Need	Proportion
1-bedroom flats	132	23%
2-bedroom flats	0	0%
2-bedroom houses	117	20%
3-bedroom houses	260	46%
4 +-bedroom houses	61	11%
Total	570	100%

Source: East Kent SHMA 2009

Developer contributions for Affordable Housing

Our policy is that 35% of new housing on qualifying sites should be Affordable Homes (AH). 70% of new AH should be for rent; 30% shared ownership. These expectations will be consolidated into the new Local Plan.

The types of new market homes needed

Table 6 shows the recommended mix of property types for market housing based on household sizes. This is a good general guide. However, households purchase the size and type of home they can afford and want, not necessarily what they need. We recognise that each site will command its own mix.

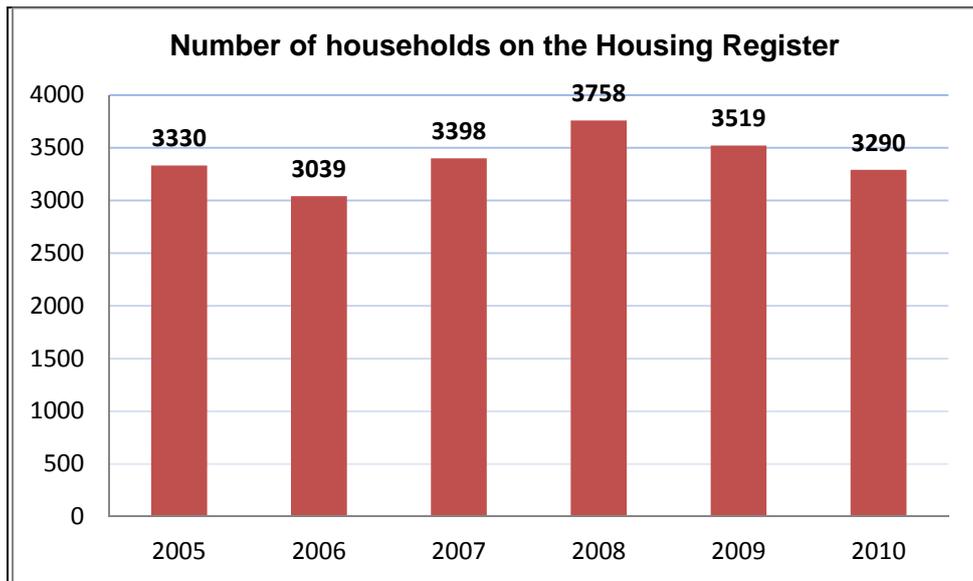
Table 6: Recommended property types for new market housing

Household	Property type	Proportion
Singles	1-bedroom flats	15%
Singles, couples no children, people needing support	2-bedroom flats	15%
Couples with or without children	2-bedroom houses	30%
Couples with children	3-bedroom houses	30%
	4+-bedroom houses	10%
Total		100%

Source: East Kent SHMA 2009

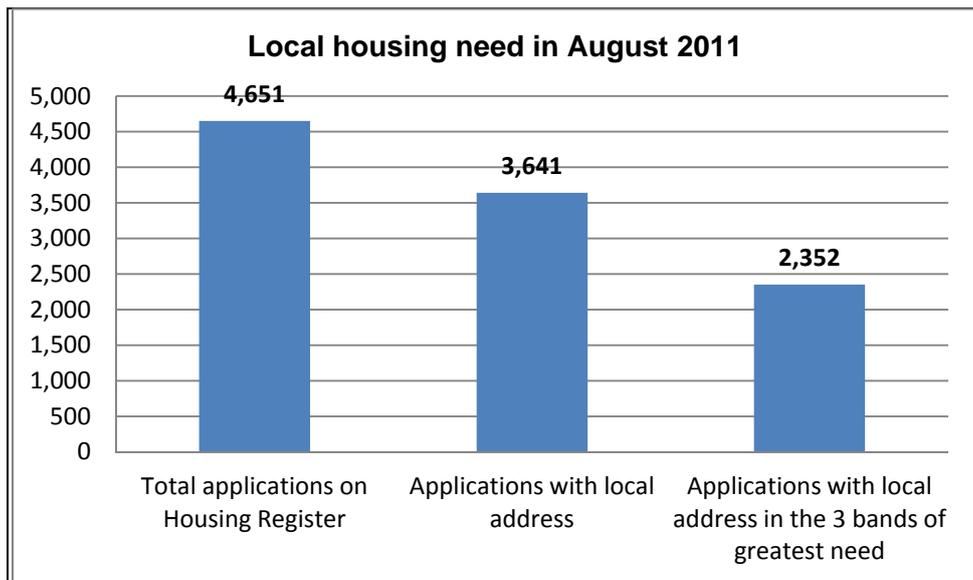
The Housing Need Register

This is an important indicator of demand for affordable housing. It is a joint register with HAs. Access is open to most people irrespective of housing need.



Source: HSSA returns 2005 – 2010

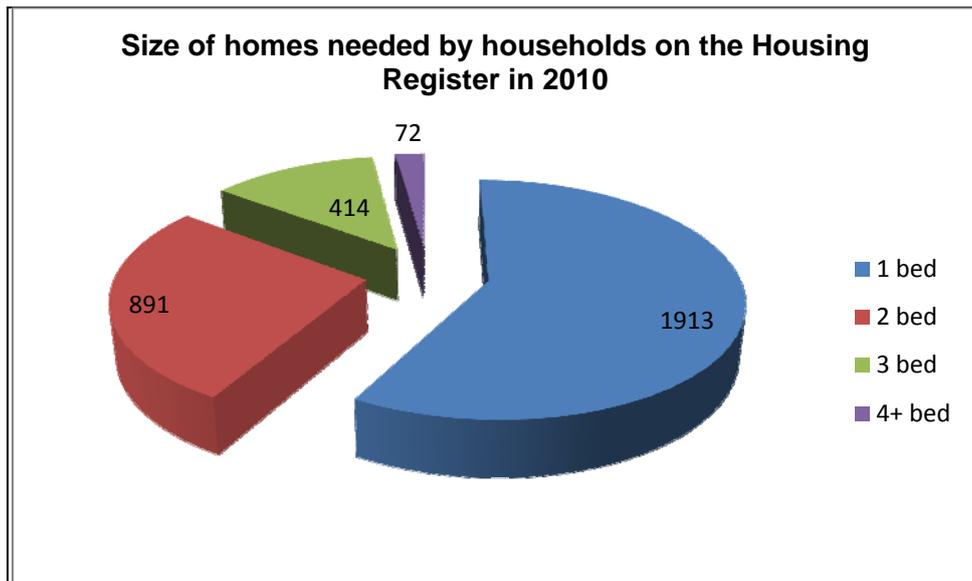
Applicants are placed into one of five bands, combining factors that assess the level of housing need and the length of time in housing need. The graph below shows that 51% of applications are from local people who are assessed as being in greatest housing need, as defined by CLG guidance.



Source: Housing Needs Register August 2011

The council's allocations policies will be reviewed in response to government proposals to let councils decide who qualifies to go on the Housing Register. The government will continue to decide which groups are given priority because of their vulnerability or need.

The chart below shows a breakdown of households on the Register, based on the size of accommodation needed according to current policy, which is quite prescriptive.



The most urgent assessed need is for family housing. There is great demand for one-bedroom properties, but not by people with the highest assessed need. Many applicants are over 60 years old, but few want designated older-persons accommodation because the size and type of council properties do not reflect their needs or aspirations.

We lack information about the housing requirements of applicants with physical disabilities. We will improve collection and analysis of data when people apply to join the Housing Needs Register. We can then plan for the right type and number of homes, either existing properties adapted for the purpose, or specially-designed new HA accommodation.

In 2009/10 463 socially rented properties were let. Of these, 335 were let through Choice Based Lettings to applicants from the Housing Register. The remaining 128 were 47 homeless people, 68 mutual exchanges and 13 management moves.

Demand for shared ownership homes

In July 2011, 281 people were registered for shared ownership. 181 have a local connection. The majority were single people and childless couples. Therefore, most shared ownership homes should be two-bedroom properties.

Our research among young working people revealed that few knew about shared ownership, because it is so closely identified with social housing rather than home ownership. The continued aspiration for home ownership leads us to believe that there is scope to meet more people's housing needs by expanding shared ownership and developing a marketing strategy that identifies it more closely with market housing.

Rural housing needs

There is a lot of evidence nationally that affordable housing is vital for the survival of rural communities. We commissioned 12 rural housing needs surveys during the last ten years in partnership with Parish Councils. New affordable homes have been built in three villages. The surveys identified unmet need for 119 new affordable homes, of mainly one-, two- and three-bedrooms. Applying these findings to the remaining 24 rural parishes, potentially 286 affordable rural homes are needed.

It is important for rural communities that we understand their housing needs, and that the benefits of local needs housing are clearly explained. Housing need in rural areas is often masked by the appearance of affluence. The need in each parish seems modest, but new affordable homes:

- Enable young people to set up home for the first time.
- Allow families to live in their home village.

- Tempt older people to downsize and release under-occupied family homes for re-use by local families.
- Support sustainable communities.

We support KHG's *Kent Rural Protocol* and are working hard with parish councils and HAs for more affordable rural homes. The Local Plan will support this approach. We will commission a series of surveys to complete our understanding of rural housing needs.

Homelessness

In 2009/10 we made 228 homelessness decisions. This rose to 738 in 2010/11 because of better recording of non-Priority Need cases. The first three quarters of 2011/12 show a reduction, but projecting the figures for the year to date, we expect to make about 570 decisions in 2011/12.

The main causes of homelessness are family and relationship breakdown, domestic violence, and the end of Assured Shorthold tenancies. We think that difficult economic circumstances and Housing Benefit reform will also have an impact in 2011/12. Homelessness trends are in Appendix F. Our strategic approach is set out in the East Kent Homelessness Strategy, which will be refreshed in early 2012. In 2011, councillors completed a Homelessness Scrutiny Review, which will help to inform the Homelessness Strategy.

Preventing homelessness

We aim to prevent homelessness, rather than deal with its consequences. There has not been the same dramatic increase in repossessions as in previous recessions, primarily because of low mortgage interest rates. We want to avoid repossessions as much as possible.

We facilitated the introduction of the national Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS) in the district in 2009. It was a catalyst for new and improved partnerships of legal and debt advice services to help people keep their homes and prevent homelessness. Key successes are:

- 17 homes purchased by HAs through the MRS, enabling families to remain in their homes as tenants.
- Canterbury Housing Advice Centre advised 138 cases in 2010/11 and 201 in 2011/12.
- Table 7 summarises the case handled by the Court Desk legal advice service.

Table 7: Summary of cases handled by Court Desk

Year	No. of cases	No. of court orders allowing families to remain	Tenure			
			Owner occupiers	HA tenant	Council tenant	Private tenant
2010	82	75	59	9	4	8
2011	122	113	82	25	8	8
Total	204	188	141	35	12	16

These services are the most valuable legacy of MRS. The council continues to support them financially through Homelessness Grant. Better publicity will ensure that more people use these services, and use them earlier, improving their chances of success.

Emerging issues affecting homelessness

Major challenges that may lead to more homelessness are:

- Housing benefit reform** in April 2012 will reduce the ability of low income households to afford private rented accommodation. Only three in ten properties will be affordable for people on Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The shortfall between market rents and LHA is shown in Table 8. We expect 322 households will be adversely affected, most living in one- and two-bedroom homes.

Table 8: Canterbury's Local Housing Allowance rates in October 2011

Accommodation type	per week	Weekly shortfall
1 bedroom shared facilities	£71.58	£9
1 bedroom self contained	£114.23	£24
2 bedrooms	£144.23	£29
3 bedrooms	£173.08	£33
4 bedrooms	£253.85	£6

- ii. **Most single LHA applicants under 35 will only get enough money for a room in a shared house.** Until January 2012 this applied only to single people under 25. About 400 people currently in self-contained accommodation will be affected, equating to a need for about 100 more HMOs. We are worried that vulnerable single people have to live in shared houses. We want to find ways to minimise potential risks and help people to find safe, secure, quality accommodation.

In addition householders with non-dependent adult children will have to pay more. Some may evict their non-dependant. Most of those affected are unlikely to be in Priority Need under homelessness legislation, but will need advice and assistance, stretching limited resources. The council is working with housing associations and reputable landlords to increase the stock of well managed, good quality HMOs and studio flats within LHA rates.

- iii. **Insufficient accommodation for large families.** Increasing the number of affordable, large family homes is a priority. However, under the new Affordable Rent model, it is not financially viable to build four-bedroom homes. We are in discussions with private and HA partners to expand the Housing Association Leasing Scheme. LHA changes will worsen the situation because the highest rate available for any family will be for four bedrooms, no matter how many more bedrooms they need. We know of 12 families who will be affected, with consequences for stable family life.
- iv. **Changes to the benefit system.** There are proposals to reform the welfare system and incorporate Housing Benefit into a Universal Credit. Part of the Credit is expected to cover rent or mortgage interest. It has been proposed to pay all the Credit to the claimant rather than pay the rent element direct to landlords. This may lead to arrears and more homelessness. Details have yet to be finalised.
- v. **Young peoples' accommodation.** Providers of housing and housing-related support try to reconcile families. Private sector landlords are reluctant to rent to young people because of poor perceptions about lifestyles and behaviour. This long-standing problem needs a bigger and better range of accommodation and support.

Rough sleeping

A small number of people sleep rough and are some of the most vulnerable and excluded members of the community. Local and national research, based on street counts and interview studies, identified links between rough sleeping and a complex range of other problems and support needs, such as mental health, physical disability and substance misuse. In 2008, the rough sleeper count found eight people who met the strict criteria. This number was disappointingly high, as the council and its partners committed themselves to end rough sleeping in the East Kent Homelessness Strategy, and the figure had been reducing consistently since 2002. In autumn 2010 an independently verified count using the CLG's new criteria found three people sleeping rough. Quarterly estimates have been commissioned for two years from late 2011 to improve our understanding of this issue. In November 2011, agencies reported 22 known rough sleepers in the district.

Accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The East Kent GTAA (2007) provides evidence of the accommodation needs of travellers (Table 9).

Table 9: Accommodation requirement of travellers

Accommodation required	2007-11	2012-17	Total
Permanent social rented pitches	9	6	15
Permanent private residential pitches	13	8	21
Travelling Showpeople families	1	1	2
Social rented transit pitches	8	0	8
Private transit pitches	7	0	7
Social rented housing	1	2	3
Private housing	0	1	1
Total	39	18	57

Source: East Kent GTAA (Table 32)

The findings were benchmarked in 2009 and found to be robust. They underpinned advice for the Partial Review of the South East Plan, which was coordinated by KCC. The review recommended increasing Canterbury's requirement from 36 to 54 pitches. It also proposed 37 transit pitches across Kent as part of a network covering the South East of England. This figure is not broken down to district level.

The council is now responsible for deciding pitch numbers. Since the GTAA was completed two permanent planning permissions have been granted for traveller pitches, one of which is conditioned with a personal permission. Temporary planning permissions, together with the two permanent permissions, have resulted in a net increase of three pitches to date.

The findings of the GTAA need to be addressed with the engagement of Gypsy and Traveller communities.

The need for housing-related support

Housing-related support for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities is delivered via Supporting People (SP), a partnership between local housing authorities, Social Services, Health and Probation. The Kent SP Strategy 2010-2015 aims to promote independence and autonomy. Its objectives are to:

- Reduce homelessness
- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviours
- Reduce social exclusion and improve community cohesion
- Increase access to education, training and employment.

Top priority groups for new services are:

- Young people at risk
- People who have mental health as well as substance misuse problems
- People fleeing domestic abuse
- Vulnerable single people.

Current provision

Need is analysed every six months, based on current provision and new requests for support. A summary is in Table 10. This information underpins the SP strategy and commissioning of services. Increasingly, commissioning is done at East Kent level, and includes some Canterbury-based projects and residents. This sub-regional dimension is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Summary of housing-related support needs by primary client group

Service user group	Long-term accommodation based bed spaces		Short-term accommodation based bed spaces		Short-term floating support service units *	
	Canterbury-specific	East Kent (inc. some Canterbury)	Canterbury-specific	East Kent (inc. some Canterbury)	Canterbury-specific	East Kent (inc. some Canterbury)
Single homeless			118		58	359
Rough sleepers			1	45		
Mental health	6		10		11	121

Young people at risk			17			120
Teenage parents			6			88
Alcohol problems			18			
Learning disabilities	8					
Older persons	345	17	25			
Community alarms	846	17				
Frail elderly	132					
Families						81
Offenders/those at risk of offending						22
Drug problems						151
Domestic abuse						152

* A unit of short-term floating support is 2 hours a week for generic services & 3 hours a week for specialist services.

Source: Supporting People Needs Analysis 2010

In 2009/10 398 new service users from our district were referred to SP. 92% had lived here for more than six months. 367 of new service users required floating support. In 2010/11, 7.32% of the county SP budget was spent in Canterbury district with a further 9.9% in East Kent. Much of the current spending profile is historic, with services for older people accounting for a disproportionate share of funding and units.

Future needs

- Existing support services for 16 and 17 year olds in Canterbury struggle to cope with the high demand for accommodation from people who are often very vulnerable. Revenue funding is available from SP for ten new bed spaces in 2011/12 and the Local Investment Plan aspires to address this need.
- Accommodation-based services for people with a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance problems.
- Investment in services for older people living in the community in privately rented housing or owner occupation.
- Many people with learning disabilities live with ageing carers and will require accommodation and support in the future. A needs survey has been undertaken in the district for the Kent Housing Action Plan for People with a Learning Disability and the responses are being analysed.

7. Conclusions

Canterbury district is a lively and successful economic centre, yet the evidence of housing need is compelling. Affordable, decent housing is one of the top five issues for local residents, particularly those under 40 years of age.

Our population is changing: we have high and increasing numbers of both young and old people. This creates challenges. We need accommodation and services that enable older residents to live independent and fulfilling lives. We must also do something to release the huge number of under-occupied family-sized homes by providing attractive accommodation that will tempt older people to downsize.

The huge number of young people reflects the city's position as a centre for education. This has many positive effects: jobs, prosperity and a vibrant cultural life. However, there are downsides, with concentrations of students affecting communities and distorting the housing market.

Many family-sized homes are shared student houses. Competition for accommodation from students contributes to high housing costs. Economic vitality masks deprivation and low incomes. Combined, these factors make it difficult for many local people, particularly families with children, to find suitable homes that they can afford to rent or buy. Increasing the amount of purpose-built student accommodation is vital to reduce the pressures on the

housing market and release family-sized homes for occupation by families. The housing market needs to be rebalanced to provide more houses that local families can afford.

With all these challenges, it is disappointing that over 600 homes in the district have been empty for six months or more. There are genuine reasons why many are unoccupied, but they are a wasted resource. We will continue to look for new ways to tackle this problem.

Many people still aspire to home ownership, but cannot achieve their ambition. We need more low-cost market and shared ownership housing, and better availability of mortgage finance. For those unable to buy a home, there is a clear need for more rented homes that people employed locally can afford, particularly in the light of changes to the Housing Benefit system. We will aim to increase the number of affordable homes provided through developer contributions.

We are very worried about the future for young people, particularly vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds. This is a major issue for us. We want to see more accommodation and support to help young people avoid homelessness and achieve their full potential.

We also want to retain locally educated graduates to help build new knowledge- and technology-based industries and achieve our economic goals. Housing must be part of the solution to the low-wage economy: part of an integrated package to attract new businesses with higher-skilled and better paid employment into the district.

This agenda is exciting and ambitious. We must be flexible and seize every opportunity. We are determined to make better use of homes that already exist, build the right sort of new homes and get the best from the planning system. Many of the potential solutions are not within our control and are difficult to deliver, but we will act as a catalyst, bringing the right people together to enable things to happen.

8. Delivering our community's priorities

Our action plan (Appendix G) responds to the community's priorities and the evidence of housing need. We have assessed the potential impact of each action (Appendix H) and will focus effort and resources on those that will deliver the most.

Many elements of the action plan are complex and not within our control, which affects the ease with which they can be delivered. The greatest risks to our plans are financial. We rely on partner organisations that share our vision and we aim to persuade others of the soundness of our ideas.

The essential features of the action plan are:

People and communities

Where we aim to be by 2016:

- Our residents will be more satisfied with their area as a place to live.
- Local communities will participate in the planning process and support the development of new homes to meet local housing needs and the needs of the local economy.
- The impact on the housing market of high numbers of young people studying and living in our district will be managed effectively.
- The housing and related support needs of vulnerable people in top priority groups will be addressed.
- Effective preventative action will reduce the number of people becoming homeless.
- No-one will have to sleep rough due to lack of accommodation services.
- Vulnerable people will not be disproportionately affected by changes to LHA.

In order to meet this aim, we expect to see progress on the following measures during the next five years:

- More people satisfied with their area as a place to live.
- There will be fewer known HMOs.

- More private landlords will be members of the Student Landlord Accreditation Scheme.
- There will be fewer rough sleepers.
- More supported accommodation will be available for vulnerable young people.

Other plans:

These plans will help us to meet this priority: Local Plan, East Kent Local Investment Plan, Kent Forum Housing Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Kent Housing Action Plan, East Kent Homelessness Strategy.

Partner support:

Community: Parish Councils, Action with Communities in Rural Kent, landowners, developers, private landlords, HAs, universities, local civic groups, student unions, HCA, Supporting People, Porchlight, Catching Lives, Social Services, Mental Health Team, Citizens Advice Bureau, Canterbury Housing Advice Centre, Law Clinic, CLG, Ministry of Justice, Law Services Commission, East Kent Homelessness Forum, East Kent Housing and Kent Housing Group.

Organisational: Planning Policy, Development Management, Housing Options and Interventions, Community Safety Unit, Home Improvement Agency.

Enough homes

Where we aim to be by 2016:

- The new Local Plan will allocate enough land for the right number and type of homes in the right place to meet local housing needs and the needs of our economy.
- The need for new homes will be minimised by using existing homes more efficiently.
- There will be more family-sized homes to meet the needs of local families.
- A higher percentage of Affordable Homes will be delivered through the planning process via developer contributions.

In order to meet this aim, we expect to see progress on the following measures during the next five years:

- A higher number of ready-to-develop housing sites.
- Sufficient new homes are built to meet the housing target in the new Local Plan.
- A reducing number of applicants on the Housing Needs Register in the 3 bands of greatest need.
- More permanent planning permissions granted for Traveller pitches.
- Fewer homes empty more than 6 months.

Other plans:

These plans will also help us to meet this priority: East Kent Local Investment Plan, Kent Forum Housing Strategy.

Partner support:

Community: East Kent Housing , HAs, private landlords, KCC “No Use Empty”, East Kent Services Revenues and Benefits, universities, HCA, developers, Kent Housing Group, developers, potential private investors, traveller communities, landowners, KCC Gypsy and Traveller Unit.

Organisational: Housing Options and Interventions, Housing Services, Planning Policy, Development Management, Property Services, Public Safety Unit, Finance.

Homes local people can afford

Where we aim to be by 2016:

- We will have more homes in all tenures that families on or below the average local wage can afford to buy or rent.

In order to meet this aim, we expect to see progress on the following measures during the next five years:

- More homes built for Affordable Rent and shared ownership.

- Reducing the average income/average house price ratio.

Other plans:

These plans will also help us to meet this priority: Local Plan, East Kent Local Investment Plan, Kent Forum Housing Strategy, Economic and Visitor Economy Strategy, HRA Business Plan.

Partner support:

Community: HAs, developers, HCA, Moat Housing Group (Zone Agent), mortgage lenders, Kent Housing Group, KCC, lenders, private landlords.

Organisational: Planning Policy, Development Management, Finance, Housing Options and Interventions, Housing Services.

Quality

Where we aim to be by 2016:

- The number of excess winter deaths will have fallen because of improvements in the quality and condition of existing private homes.
- Better housing conditions will have contributed to improved health and well-being.
- New homes and neighbourhoods will be well-designed places that meet peoples' needs and where they want to live.

In order to meet this aim, we expect to see progress on the following measures during the next five years:

- Fewer excess winter deaths.
- A reduction in the number of private homes with HHSRS Category 1 hazards.
- A better average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating.
- An increased percentage of new homes that meet the Lifetime Homes Standard.
- More people satisfied with their area as a place to live.

Other plans:

- These plans will also help us to meet this priority: Local Plan, Kent Design Guide, Supporting People Strategy.

Partner support:

Community: KCC, Kent Planning Officers Group, handyperson service, Supporting People, NHS, GP surgeries, Chestfield Parish Council, architects, developers, HAs, Porchlight, Homeless Link and CLG.

Organisational: Home Improvement Agency, Planning Policy, Development Management, Housing Services.

Choice

Where we aim to be by 2016:

- All local residents will have a reasonable degree of choice about their accommodation.
- There will be a choice of homes and tenures to tempt "empty nesters" to downsize from family-sized homes.
- There will be new market rent homes funded by HAs and corporate investment.
- The range and quantity of accommodation available from small-scale providers, such as almshouse trusts co-operatives, co-housing schemes and self-builders will have increased.
- The council's revised Allocations Policy will make a significant contribution to the realisation of this strategy.

In order to meet this aim, we expect to see progress on the following measures during the next five years:

- More council and HA tenants downsizing from family-sized homes.
- More new homes built by niche providers.

Other plans:

These plans will also help us to meet this priority: Local Plan, Kent Forum Housing Strategy.

Partner support:

Community: developers, HAs, HCA, potential investors, almshouse trusts, co-operatives, self-build groups.

Organisational: Planning Policy, Development Management, Housing Options and Interventions.

9. Funding our priorities

It is very difficult to provide information on funding for more than a year or two ahead. The LIP contained estimated investment needs. However, it is already out of date because of government spending reductions, the gloomy economic climate and lack of confidence in the housing market. Information is therefore limited and subject to change. It is displayed according to the priority it supports.

People and communities

Table 11: Council resources for people and communities

Funding purpose & source	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Council housing neighbourhood & play area improvements (HRA)	£75,000	£75,000	£75,000	£106,000
Council estate improvements (HRA)	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000
Community alarms (HRA)	£22,000	£23,000	£23,000	£24,000
Homelessness Prevention Grant (CLG)	£344,000	£344,000	£344,000	£344,000
Council grants to voluntary sector for housing advice, debt advice & homelessness prevention (General Fund)	£228,719 plus £2,000 parking concessions.	£197,719 plus £2,000 parking concessions.	Not yet known.	Not yet known.
Total	£761,719	£731,719	£532,000	£564,000

Housing-related support for vulnerable people

Funding from SP in the district is £2,129,136 in 2011/12, reducing to £1,795,760 in 2012/13. The cuts are targeted to minimise their impact on priority services for young people at risk, but will adversely affect the council's own sheltered housing, extra care sheltered housing and alarm services. Contracts will be re-tendered to improve value for money, and quality of services will be improved by the introduction of payment by results. Table 12 contains information relating to Canterbury-specific and East Kent-wide projects, from which the district benefits.

Table 12: Allocation of housing-related support by service type

Service type	Base budget 2011/12	Proposed budget 2012/13 - Canterbury	Proposed budget 2012/13 - East Kent
Sheltered housing	£184,200	148,224	£7,304
Community alarms	£66,166	£22,055	£443
Extra care sheltered	£247,769	£59,840	
Long-term accommodation based support	£130,913	£100,031	
Short-term accommodation based support	£1,424,884	£1,408,166	
Home Improvement Agency	£75,204	£57,444	
Floating support service	£2,653,665		£1,519,939
Canterbury total (exc. East Kent)	£2,129,136	£1,795,760	

Source: Supporting People

New Homes Bonus

The council receives approximately £400,000 per year. It is intended to act as an incentive for development. However, we have lost other government funding, such as Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

Enough homes

Council assets

The council will use some land assets to support this priority. The value is not yet known.

New financial vehicles

We are interested in the possibilities for stimulating housing development offered by new financial models. These include:

- Emerging Kent-wide proposals to use Tax Increment Funding to pay for infrastructure.
- Investigating the appetite for institutional or private equity investment in new private rented homes, such as Real Estate Improvement Trusts.
- Encouraging a review of the Asset Disposal Strategy for council-owned land to consider greater use of alternatives to outright sale.

Homes that local people can afford

Table 13 summarises HCA grant funding for affordable homes. We have not speculated about future allocations from the HCA's Indicative Programme for 2013/14.

Table 13: Estimated HCA grant funding

Number of homes	2011/12	2012/13
5 Council houses	£315,000	
152 HA homes	£12,010,000	
81 HA homes		£3,305,000
Total	£12,325,000	£3,305,000

Developer contributions

Most developer contributions are on-site, in the form of new homes, bought and managed by HAs. However, it is anticipated that we may receive sums of £500,000 in lieu of on-site homes, to be invested in affordable housing.

Support for first time buyers

In response to the shortage of mortgage finance, we will appraise the scheme to provide council-backed indemnities for first-time buyers of market or shared ownership homes. Current proposals require investment of £1,000,000 by the council, which may be matched by KCC.

New council homes

The council would like to build new homes for rent. Current commitments are:

Table 14: HRA capital investment in new council homes

Number & location of new homes	2011/12	2012/13
5 houses at St Andrews Close	£831,000	
Warwick Road site preparation	£37,000	
44 sheltered flats at Franklyn House	£1,578,000	£1,083,000
& Ellen Court	£1,268,000	£79,000
Total = 49 new homes	£3,714,000	£1,162,000

Quality

Table 15: Council budgets for improving the quality of homes in all tenures

Funding purpose & source	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Responsive repairs to council housing – revenue (HRA)	£3,895,300	£3,882,900	£3,882,900	£3,882,900
Planned maintenance to council housing - revenue (HRA)	£643,600	£718,200	£718,200	£718,200
Improvements, renewals & repair to council housing – capital (HRA)	£4,394,000	£4,445,000	£4,047,000	£3,762,000

Disabled Facilities Grant inc. £408,000 capital grant (Housing General Fund)	£618,000	£680,000	£680,000	£680,000
Housing Assistance (General Fund)	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
Repairs and unfit houses (General Fund)	£7,800			
Heating and energy efficiency for renewable technology (General Fund)	£9,200			
Other assistance (General Fund)	£3,000			
Total	£9,590,900	£9,746,100	£9,348,100	£9,063,100

Future funding opportunities

We will:

- Support almshouse trusts to secure HCA funding to bring them up to modern standards.
- Try to maximise the impact of the government's "green deal" for private households.

Choice

Downsizing

The affordable housing programme devotes resources to improving the amount, range and quality of accommodation for "empty nesters". We are also working with KHG to develop a countywide under-occupation scheme.

Living independently

We will give people the choice of staying in their current home by providing support, aids, adaptations or improvements. Resources come from SP through payments for community alarms, home improvement agency and floating support (Table 12), Disabled Facilities Grant and repairs to unfit houses (Table 15).

10. Monitoring progress

We have a robust and challenging action plan. Regular bi-lateral meetings are held with partners most closely involved in its delivery. Measures of success are included in the council's performance management framework and reported quarterly. An annual report will be published to monitor the Housing Strategy's implementation, to respond to major policy or financial changes and to identify any amendments to the Strategy or action plan.