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# Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2012 - 2015



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# CONTENTS

	Page no	
<b>Executive Summary</b>	4	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
<b>Introduction</b>	7	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
<b>Section 1: Strategic Context</b>	8	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
National Agenda	8	
Legislative Framework for Private Sector Housing	10	
Kettering's Strategic Approach	11	Deleted: O
Consultation	11	Deleted: ur
<b>Section 2: About Kettering Borough</b>	13	Deleted: Key Issues for
Our Borough	13	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
Our Homes	14	Deleted: Profile
Our People	16	Deleted: ¶ The Borough's Private Sector Housing Stock
<b>Section 3: Our Strategic Priorities and Resources</b>	19	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
Priority 1: Ensuring Decent, Safe & Healthy Homes	20	
Priority 2: Supporting a Thriving Rented Sector	23	
Priority 3: Unlocking the Potential of Empty Homes	26	Deleted: ¶
Priority 4: Enabling People with Physical Disabilities to Retain Their Independence	29	Deleted: Priority 4: Improving Warmth & Energy Efficiency¶
Resources	32	Deleted: 5
<b>Section 4: Monitoring and Review of the Strategy</b>	36	Deleted: Special Needs
		Deleted:
<b>Section 5: Action Plan</b>	36	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
		Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	43	Formatted: Font: Not Bold, Font color: Auto

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Introduction

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The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy assesses the condition of private sector homes in our Borough and the needs of the people who live in them. The strategy sets out the Council's strategic aims for private sector housing, priorities for action over the next three years, and a more detailed action plan showing how we intend to meet our goals.

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We recognise that housing plays a key role in many areas of life including health and well being, and sustaining communities. Therefore, this strategy has been developed in close consultation with our customers, our community and our partners. Consultation will be key to monitoring our progress and informing service developments during the life of this strategy and beyond.

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### Where we are now

A survey of private sector house conditions in our Borough was conducted in 2010. The survey found that:

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- Almost a third of homes in private ownership in the Borough fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard, and an estimated 7,059 homes (19.9%) exhibit a Category 1 hazard as set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
- An estimated 1,488 privately rented homes have Category 1 hazards, which a landlord is responsible for addressing
- Similarly, an estimated 2,276 households living in the private rented sector live in non-decent homes, and of those, an estimated 1,246 are classed as vulnerable due to low incomes.

An assessment of the local population shows that:

- The average household income in the Borough is £35,346, but 60% of local households have incomes below this level.
- Nearly 1,500 households (4%) are in fuel poverty, ie spend more than 10% of their income on fuel to heat their homes.
- The biggest group in fuel poverty rent from private landlords, but around a third comprise households who own their homes outright.
- Over 7,000 households in the Borough have a household member with special needs.
- Over half of these have a physically disabled household member and around a third has someone who is a frail elderly person.

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### Where we want to be

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Our four strategic aims for private sector homes in our Borough have been developed to improve the quality of life of our Borough's residents whether they are living in homes that they own or rent from a private landlord. Our strategic aims are:

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- Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector;

- Supporting a thriving private rented sector;
- Unlocking the potential of empty homes; and
- Enabling people with physical disabilities to retain their independence.

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Improving warmth and energy efficiency in private sector housing;

Our strategic aims complement and support the Council's wider community agenda for Kettering, as well as national priorities set by the Coalition Government. They are underpinned by working in partnership with a range of individuals and agencies, including private landlords, and organisations in the public and private sectors.

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### How we will get there

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Our action plan, which is outlined later in this document, sets out what we will do to tackle our four strategic aims for private sector housing in the Borough. The plan is challenging, and will act as a guide and impetus to achieving our priorities. It will also provide the main focus for monitoring our progress against key targets contained within the strategy.

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The actions we intend to take to deliver our priorities up to 2015 are summarised as follows:

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### Strategic Priority 1: Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector

- Improve standards through advice and guidance to home owners and private tenants.
- Review our Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.
- Make available Decent Homes Grants to fund home improvements which will bring those homes occupied by qualifying households up to the Government's Decent Homes standard.
- Explore other funding streams such as loans and equity release to replace capital grants in the medium to longer term.

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### Strategic Priority 2: Supporting a thriving private rented sector

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- Provide advice and guidance to private landlords on property maintenance and good tenancy management.
- Encourage private landlords and lettings agents to join EMLAS (the East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme) and ARLA (Association of Residential Lettings Agents) as another means to raise standards.
- Explore new ways of working with private landlords to ensure a greater supply of high quality, affordable homes become available for households in housing need.
- Inspect and monitor all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the Borough to ensure that adequate risk assessments and fire precautions are in place.

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### Strategic Priority 3: Unlocking the potential of empty homes

- Monitor long term empty homes in the Borough, negotiating with owners to bring them back into use, offering incentives whenever possible.
- Work with housing association partners to purchase or lease empty properties and bring them back into use as affordable housing.
- Explore new funding streams for empty homes work, including capital grants from the Homes & Communities Agency and individual investors.

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- Identify funds so that enforcement powers can be utilised where necessary, when attempts to bring empty homes back into use voluntarily have failed and neighbouring residents are at serious risk of harm.

**Strategic Priority 5: Enabling people with physical disabilities to retain their independence**

- Deliver a housing options service to Disabled Facilities Grant applicants, providing a range of housing solutions for applicants needing adaptations.
- Review our Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure that adapted properties owned and let by the Council and housing associations are more readily released when no longer needed, and those households needing adapted properties are matched to properties best suited to their needs.
- Review our procurement process for adaptations to ensure that we get best value for money.
- In partnership with Kettering General Hospital, look at ways to speed up the discharge of patients from hospital who are unable to return home without adaptations, and reduce bed blocking.
- Explore alternative funding streams for disabled adaptations to cope with increasing demand.
- Establish ways of recycling specialist equipment such as stair lifts when no longer needed, to reduce waste and costs.

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**Strategic Priority 4: Improving warmth and energy efficiency in private sector housing**  
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**How we will know when we are there**

We will know that we are making progress when local people are:

- Living in homes which are in good condition.
- Living in homes which are appropriate to their needs and wishes.
- Living in homes which they can afford and meet their aspirations.
- Living in thriving, vibrant places where people want to live and work.

More information on how we will monitor our progress is outlined in section 4 of this Strategy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Kettering's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy assesses local housing needs, and sets out our priorities and objectives for the improvement of private sector housing in the Borough. It draws together intelligence from stock profiles, condition surveys and demographic information to help identify and understand challenges in respect of housing conditions in the private sector. It also addresses issues and challenges in relation to supporting residents with disabilities to remain independent in the own homes.

The term "housing renewal" refers to physical housing problems that can detrimentally impact on the health and well being of individuals living in poor quality or inappropriate housing, or communities living in areas that suffer poor quality housing.

This strategy sets out the Council's overarching approach to housing renewal in the private sector across our Borough. At the time of writing, there are no area based renewal initiatives in progress or planned. However, the strategy is intended to be a dynamic document, and will be reviewed and revised as up to date intelligence about housing challenges or new resources become available.

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## SECTION 1: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### NATIONAL AGENDA

The change in Government in 2010 marked the beginning of radical change that has implications for public sector service delivery and the type, nature and extent of any interventions that local authorities may take to address issues at a local level – including private sector housing renewal.

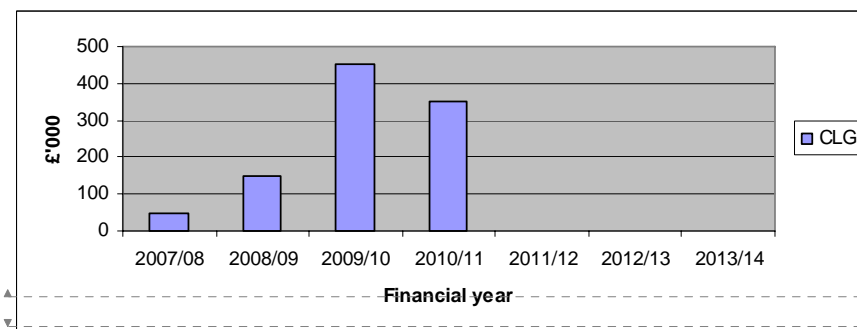
Many of the proposed changes have yet to be fully adopted as policy or legislation. However, the main changes that will or are likely to impact on housing renewal are:

- 1) An overall reduction in local government spending allocation by 26% between financial years 2010/11 and 2014/15;
- 2) Devolution of power to local communities and increased local accountability proposed through the Localism Act;
- 3) Welfare reforms including changes to welfare provisions to address issues of worklessness and fairness. The main changes will include a simplification of the benefits system and a capping of household benefits income such that it does not exceed the median income of a similar household deriving income from work.

The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review sets out the Government's plans for managing the high level of public debt. With few exceptions, many local authority budgets that were previously ring fenced to provide specific services were amalgamated. The intention was to further enhance local freedoms to spend money to address local issues, albeit with less money.

While ring fencing of budgets has been removed for the most part, the methods used to calculate the level of public sector finance has remained largely unchanged to date, although significant changes are anticipated from 2013/14 onwards. In summary, allocations are calculated to reflect issues at local level for which Central Government are prepared to contribute financially. One notable change is the Government's removal of funding for Private Sector Housing Renewal. This was a funding mechanism that acknowledged existing housing stock condition challenges at a local level. This equated to around £317 million annually available to local authorities to address poor housing.

Graph 1: Funding for Decent Homes Grants (past and projected)



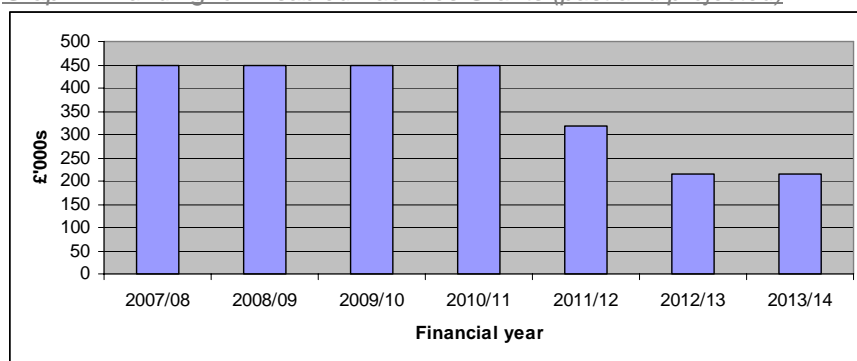
NB: All Decent Homes activities have been funded by CLG grants since 2007/08.



For some practitioners, the removal of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Fund denotes that Central Government has determined local stock condition challenges are not a priority for which it will continue to support financially. In essence, Government will not contribute to meeting such challenges, but freedoms previously afforded by the Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England) Order 2002 and the removal of ring fencing to most local authority budgets, means that such issues may continue to be addressed at local level if there is a need and justification to do so.

The Government has acknowledged the need to continue to support mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and will continue to make allocations accordingly. However, this is no longer a ring fenced budget, and the amount of money that will actually be made available will be determined at a local level annually, along with other priorities for local capital allocations.

Graph 2: Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (past and projected)



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The Comprehensive Spending Review included commitments intended to implement and secure desired efficiencies. One of those commitments was the devolution of power to communities through the Localism Act. The Localism Act received Royal Assent in November 2011. Parts of the Act will take effect from April 2012, although other parts will take longer.

The Act is intended to give councils more freedom from central control and enable them to respond more flexibly to the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve. One fundamental provision of the Act is to give councils a general power of competence. Currently councils may do only what the law specifically says they may do. In future, councils will be able to do anything the law does not specifically forbid them to do. The idea is to allow councils to be innovative and imaginative in their approach to meeting local needs.

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The Welfare Reform Bill published in February 2011 also heralds major changes to the benefits system, streamlining individual benefits into one Universal Credit over the next decade. However, changes to the Local Housing Allowance which provides financial support to low income households with their rent have already been implemented from January 2012, when the age threshold to receive Local Housing Allowance for a self contained house or flat, as opposed to a room in a shared house, was raised from 25 to 35 years. This will undoubtedly increase demand for rooms in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). HMOs are properties that include units of accommodation let to people who do not live as a single household such as shared housing, bedsits, hostels, etc.

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In November 2011, the Government also *launched "Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England"*. This document is significant for the Council's private sector housing function, as it confirmed the Government's intention to protect and enhance grant funding for disabled adaptations, enabling elderly and disabled people to remain in their own homes. It also announced the provision of an additional £100m to bring empty properties back into use, and £51 million to support handypersons schemes which provide small scale repairs and adaptations for elderly and disabled people.

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Following announcements made in the national Housing Strategy, the Council was awarded £30,000 from Central Government in January 2012, in addition to the £216,000 already received for 2011/12, to fund disabled adaptations through the Disabled Facilities Grant. However, other funding streams will only be accessed through a competitive bidding process in order to obtain an allocation for our Borough.

## LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

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In addition to the changes to national policy, other fundamental changes to housing law have been passed since the previous Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy was adopted.

Firstly, the "fitness standard", used to evaluate the condition of housing, has been replaced with a new system of rating the impact of poor housing on the health and wellbeing of occupiers and visitors. The new system, enacted within the Housing Act 2004, is called the 'Housing Health and Safety Rating System' (HHSRS). This identifies 29 hazards against which impact on health in terms of risk and likely outcome are scored to determine if intervention is required. Once scored, the hazard is categorised into bands A to J depending on the score. Bands A, B and C are further categorised as Category 1 hazards against which the Council has a legal duty to intervene, while bands D to J are Category 2 Hazards against which the Council can use powers to intervene if necessary. Many local authorities produce enforcement policy documents, which set out a framework for determining when mandatory action will be taken and when discretionary powers will be used. A revised Enforcement Policy for Kettering will be produced later in 2012.

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The Act also introduced the requirement for certain larger Houses in Multiple Occupation to be licensed by local housing authorities. While there are some exceptions, these are generally properties that are three or more storeys high and are occupied by five or more persons living as two or more households.

The Act introduced Management Orders giving local authorities the duty in some circumstances and powers in other situations to take over the management of certain HMO's. The same provisions can also be used to address antisocial behaviour by tenants of private landlords, providing such action is justified and part of a more holistic set of measures.

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It also introduced the power to make Empty Dwelling Management Orders to address problems associated with individual long term empty properties. The provisions effectively allow the transfer of the management of those properties to the local housing authority. The use and scope of the powers is subject to strict criteria that determine when such powers may be applicable.

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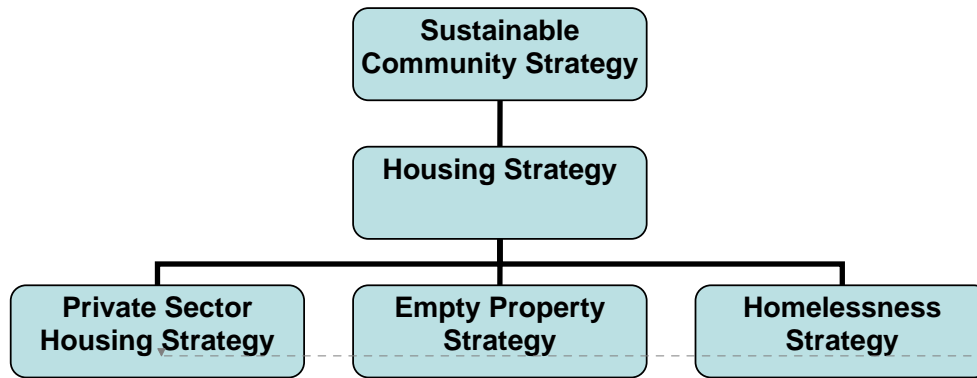
Finally, the Act conveys powers to designate areas within the Borough for selective licensing of the private rented sector. These powers are available subject to strict criteria conditions being met, and may be used where there are problems as a result of low demand for property which is causing downward spiralling of property prices and deprivation. They can also be used when there is a significant problem with antisocial behaviour among private sector tenants and the landlords responsible are failing to address those problems.

## KETTERING'S STRATEGIC APPROACH

This Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy forms part of a hierarchy of plans and strategies developed by Kettering Borough Council, which seek to transform national strategies and objectives into real improvements in local people's lives. These include a Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Empty Property Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

With strong links between these and other Council strategies, as well as those produced by partner organisations whose activities link with our own, we are able to adopt a clear and co-ordinated approach to turn aspirations into reality.

### Hierarchy of Kettering Borough Council's strategies and plans



## CONSULTATION

The following consultations were carried out in compiling this strategy:

### Internal:

- Semi-structured interviews with officers on renewal activity and intervention including grants and enforcement activity;
- Semi-structured interviews with officers regarding Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's);
- Semi-structured interviews with officers from the Home Improvement Agency regarding DFG's;
- Semi-structured interviews and case conference workshop with officers regarding empty properties;

- Several meetings and interviews with the Housing Strategy and Options Manager.

With partners:

- Conversations with Supporting People regarding DFG's;
- Conversations with the Manager of the Occupation Therapy Service regarding DFG's;
- Conversations and meetings where appropriate with Foundations and best practice local authorities regarding DFG's.

With customers:

- Customer interviews regarding service provision experience in respect of DFG's and Decent Homes Grants;
- A workshop evaluation with staff looking at the strategic importance and priorities in relation to the Private Rented Sector;
- A presentation and questionnaire to private landlords who are members of the East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme;
- A questionnaire to other private landlords.

The semi-structured interviews with officers from the Council, Home Improvement Agency, Supporting People and Occupational Therapy Service regarding Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's), as well as interviews with service users, all informed a separate report which provided an evaluation of the administration of DFG's across Kettering Borough. This informed a service and policy improvement programme which commenced in late 2011.

The semi-structured interviews and case conference workshop with officers regarding empty properties revealed the need to review the current Empty Property Strategy, and in particular the aims, objectives, types of interventions that could be considered, and importantly, the Council's ability to deliver against any commitments it might undertake in a new strategy.

A workshop evaluation with staff looking at the strategic importance and priorities in relation to the private rented sector culminated in identifying a number of objectives, and proposed actions that could help deliver those objectives. These were subsequently consulted upon with private landlords and letting agents, and the role of Landlord Liaison Officer launched to provide a dedicated resource to this area of work with the help of a grant from DCLG.

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## OUR HOMES

In 2010, Michael Dyson Associates were commissioned to conduct a condition survey of private sector homes across the Borough with funding from GOEM (Government Offices for the East Midlands). Findings from this survey include:

### Tenure

- 9.4% of the housing stock in Kettering Borough is owned and managed by the Council, compared to 7.9% nationally.
- Housing association stock accounts for 3.9% of the total, compared to 9.9% nationally.
- Approximately 36,000 (87%) homes are either owner occupied or privately rented, although nationally this is lower at 82%.

### Distribution of Private Sector Homes

- The private rented sector accounts for 23.6% of the private sector housing stock, which is 6% higher than the national average.

Table 1: Distribution of Private Sector Homes

Tenure	Total Estimated Dwellings		English House Condition Survey 2008/09
	Estimated Number of Dwellings	Percentage	
Owned with mortgage	14,844	41.2%	44.4%
Owned outright	12,671	35.2%	38.3%
Privately rented	8,493	23.6%	17.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,008</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: KBC Private Sector House Condition Survey – Michael Dyson Associates 2010)

- Further investigation of the private rented sector reveals that terraced houses and flats account for over 70% of the privately rented stock. This probably reflects the better investment returns from rents on smaller, cheaper properties.

### Property Types

There are several important points to note in respect of the stock dwelling type profile for the Borough, as shown in the table below:

Table 2: Private Sector Property Types in Kettering

Dwelling Type	Total Estimated Dwellings		English House Condition Survey 2008/09
	Estimated Number of Dwellings	% of total stock	
Bungalow	5198	14.4%	9.2%
Flat	3241	9.0%	13.5%
House – Detached	8244	22.9%	21.0%
House semi Detached	9990	27.7%	27.7%
House – Terrace	9335	25.9%	28.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36008</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: KBC Private Sector House Condition Survey – Michael Dyson Associates 2010)

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- The proportion of bungalows is comparatively high compared to the national picture.
- 95% of bungalows are owner occupied and 75% are owned outright. This is encouraging in terms of providing accommodation that is particularly appealing to an ageing population, but it does raise concerns about the availability of bungalows for those who do not own their own homes. This is an issue that will be considered within the overarching Housing Strategy which addresses wider housing needs.
- Conversely, the proportion of flats within the private sector is significantly lower than the national average, 9% of the total compared to 13.5% nationally. The vast majority of flats are privately rented (73%).

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## Age of the Housing Stock

The Borough has benefited from a period of prolific new build, with 9,115 new homes being developed since 1990, equating to 25.3% of all private sector dwellings. Furthermore, the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey for Kettering estimates that 55% of private housing has been built since 1965, compared to 41.5% nationally:

Table 3: Private sector dwellings in Kettering Borough by year of completion

Year of construction	No of dwellings	Percentage of total
Pre 1919	7,285	20.2%
1919 – 1944	3,898	10.8%
1945 – 1964	5,017	13.9%
1965 – 1980	7,561	21%
1981 – 1990	3,132	8.7%
1991 onwards	9,115	25.3%
TOTAL	36,008	100%

(Source: KBC Private Sector House Condition Survey – Michael Dyson Associates 2010)

## House Conditions

### a) Non-Decent Homes

The stock condition survey found that overall the condition of the private housing stock in our Borough is relatively good:

- Around 10,965 properties are estimated to be non-decent. This equates to 30.1% of the private sector stock compared to a national average of 35.8%.
- However, while the number of non-decent homes in Kettering is below average, almost a third of private sector homes are non-decent currently.
- An estimated 19.6% of private sector dwellings also exhibit a Category 1 hazard (as set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System). While below the national average of 23.5%, it still represents an estimated 7,059 homes that require formal intervention in accordance with the Council's statutory duty under Section 5 of the Housing Act 2004.
- While it is appropriate to note that the lower proportion of non-decent homes compared to the national average, one contributing factor to this will be the diluting of the proportion locally by the above average number of new builds in recent years.
- Therefore, because of the ageing nature of the housing stock, providing Decent Homes and tackling the most serious hazards in the private sector housing stock will be an ongoing challenge.

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## b) Conditions in the Private Rented Sector

- The private rented stock is in much better condition than the national profile, with 26.8% being non-decent compared to 45.4% nationally.
- 17.5% have Category 1 hazards present compared to 30.5% of private rented stock nationally.
- However, to put this into context, an estimated 1,488 privately rented properties have Category 1 hazards which a landlord is responsible for addressing, and for which the Council has a duty to take enforcement action.
- Similarly, an estimated 2,276 households in the private rented sector live in non-decent homes, and of those, an estimated 1,246 are vulnerable due to low incomes, as set out in the table below:

Table: Vulnerability and Decency by Household Tenure

Household Tenure	Total Number	Decent Homes Failures		Vulnerable Households		Failing Decent Homes AND Vulnerable	
		Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%
Owned Mortgage	14855	3796	25.6%	3155	21.3%	569	18.0%
Owned outright	12671	4893	38.6%	3406	26.9%	1563	45.9%
Rented sector	8493	2276	26.8%	3147	37.1%	1246	39.6%
Total	36008	10965	30.5%	9707	27.0%	3378	34.8%

(Source: Kettering Private Sector House Condition Survey – Michael Dyson Associates 2010)

The findings from the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010 highlight the need to act to improve the quality of life for a significant proportion of households living in the Borough, particularly those who are vulnerable and living in sub-standard house conditions.

## OUR PEOPLE

### Population

- The population of the Borough is estimated to be 90,600 (ONS mid 2010).
- Life expectancy in the Borough is close to the national average with men reaching 78.3 years and women 81.9 years (ONS 2009).
- Approximately 16,900 people in the Borough (18.6%) have reached state pension age, although this is projected to increase significantly in future years.

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### Household Incomes

- The average household income in Kettering is £35,346 per annum (CACI 2011).
- However, 60% of the local population has a household income below this level.
- The median household income is £25,000 - £30,000 per annum, equivalent to an average of £529.00 per week (CACI 2011).
- 5,130 applicants were claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit at August 2010 (ONS 2010). This is an increase from 4,640 in the previous year.
- Nearly a third of full time workers are employed in jobs requiring low skills (NOMIS 2010), demonstrating a low skills, low wage economy in the Borough.

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## Disability

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- 4,240 people are claiming Disability Living Allowance (ONS 2010).
- A further 2,420 are claiming Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement (ONS 2010).
- The single biggest group of people claiming Incapacity Benefit are in the 29-45 year age range.

In addition, the last borough wide Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) conducted by Fordham Research found that:

- There were 7,157 households with a household member who had special needs because they are “frail elderly”, or had a physical disability, mental illness, learning difficulty or other special reason.
- Of these, 4,148 households had a physically disabled household member.
- The next biggest group was frail elderly, who made up 1,918 households.

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The HNA found that there was a wide range of improvements and adaptations required to meet their special needs, but the most commonly sought improvements were:

- Shower unit – 2,122 households
- Extra handrails – 1,677 households
- Other alterations to bathroom and/or toilet including level access shower – 1,542 households

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In addition, while those with special needs were more likely to live in social rented housing than those with none, over half of all frail elderly people lived in homes which they owned without a mortgage.

## Fuel Poverty

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A household is described as being in fuel poverty when its members are unable to afford adequate warmth owing to the combined effect of low income, inadequate or expensive forms of heating, and inefficient thermal comfort in their homes. Generally this is accepted as meaning when a household pays more than 10% of its income on heating. The 2010 Private Sector House Condition Survey looked at fuel poverty among the Borough’s residents, and estimates that:

- 1,457 households (4%) are in fuel poverty
- 308 homes occupied by households in fuel poverty are owned with a mortgage. 475 owned outright and 674 rented from private landlords
- 985 households were deemed vulnerable and in receipt of means tested benefits
- 595 households had at least one member aged over 60 years.

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## Summary

In summary, the main challenges we face in our Borough are:

- Poor conditions in private sector housing, particularly among the older housing stock;
- A fast growing private rented sector which needs to be of good quality and properly managed to ensure the health and safety residents;

- Increasing demand for HMO accommodation for single people under the age of 35 as a result of welfare reform;
- Increasing demand for disabled adaptations as the current ageing population grows and younger disabled people are able to live at home;
- Fuel poverty, particularly among older owner occupiers who are asset rich but income poor, and private tenants on low incomes;
- Tackling empty homes which are a wasted resource;
- Significant cuts in Central Government grants to fund our private sector interventions;
- Increasing demand for our grants and services at time when resources are rapidly dwindling.

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## SECTION 3: OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND RESOURCES

In our last Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy published in 2003, we set three strategic priorities which reflected the challenges facing the Council, our partners and our local community. These priorities have been reviewed and expanded to reflect changes in central government policy and the challenges we now face, and are summarised below:

- Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector;
- Supporting a thriving private rented sector;
- Unlocking the potential of empty homes; and
- Enabling people with special needs to retain their independence.

Each of these priorities is considered in turn, with details on our achievements in this area to date, the challenges they now present and our options to tackle them. More information on how we will address each of our strategic priorities is then outlined in more detail in our action plan at the back of this document.

## **PRIORITY 1: ENSURING DECENT, SAFE AND HEALTHY HOMES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

### **Our achievements:**

- We have awarded Decent Homes Grants to the value of £290,155 to 108 households on low incomes between 2008 and 2011, to help householders bring their properties up to the Government's Decent Homes standards.
- Grant funding has been spent on improvement works such as window and door replacements (as in the example below); roof repairs and replacements and central heating installation.
- We have awarded £45,300 grant funding to improve energy efficiency in 65 private sector homes through initiatives such as Warm Front top up grants between 2008 and 2011.

*Window requiring replacement.....*



*And after, with the assistance of a Decent Homes grant....*



## The challenges we face:

- ***Around thirty percent of private sector homes fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard.*** The recent stock condition survey estimates that around 10,965 private homes are non-decent. This equates to 30.1% of the private sector stock, compared to a national average of 35.8%. While the number of non-decent homes in Kettering is below average, it still means that almost a third of private sector homes are non-decent currently, around 27% of which are occupied by vulnerable households on low incomes.
- ***An estimated 19.6% of private sector homes (7,509 dwellings) also exhibit a Category 1 hazard*** (as set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System). Category 1 hazards pose the most serious risk to occupants, including serious injury or even death, and place a statutory duty on the Council to rectify under Section 5 of the Housing Act 2004. Deleted: t
- ***The most frequent reason for properties having a Category 1 hazard is lack of thermal comfort (95%).***
- ***Although owner occupation is higher than the national average in Kettering Borough, incomes are relatively low.*** As a result, an increasing number of households are approaching us for financial help to bring their homes up to the Decent Homes standard.
- ***In addition, an estimated 35% of homes in private ownership are owned outright, predominantly by older people, many of whom are asset rich but income poor.*** For these people, maintaining their homes and keeping themselves warm is proving increasingly difficult on already hard stretched incomes.
- ***An estimated 4% of local people live in fuel poverty.*** As fuel prices are expected to increase in future years but real incomes fall, fuel poverty is also set to increase in our Borough. Deleted: xx
- ***However, grant funding from central government to support Decent Homes activities has ended.*** For several years, the Council has received grant payments from the Department for Communities and Local Government to fund grants to owner occupiers and private landlords to help them bring their homes up to the required standard. However, the last payment received was in 2010/11, and in 2011/12, Decent Homes grants have been funded from the previous year's under spend. Once this fund has been exhausted, the Council has no other funding to support Decent Homes activities identified.

## What we will focus on over the next three years to tackle these challenges:

- ✓ Carry out inspections to dwellings reported as sub-standard when requested, providing advice and guidance as necessary. Deleted:
- ✓ Improve standards through regulation and enforcement action where necessary, although enforcement will only be utilised when all other avenues have been exhausted. Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial, 11 pt  
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- | ✓ Review publicity and information leaflets provided to home owners, private landlords and tenants to support informal interventions.
- | ✓ Review our Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, to ensure that the Council continues to drive up standards in the private sector.
- ✓ While funding remains, provide Decent Homes Grants to owner occupiers on low incomes up to a maximum of £5,000. This will cover home improvements such as replacement heating or windows and doors in order to remove Category 1 hazards, improve thermal comfort and ensure the property is wind and weather proof.
- ✓ Explore other funding streams to support low income households in their efforts to bring their homes up to the Decent Homes standard in the future, including loans and equity release schemes.

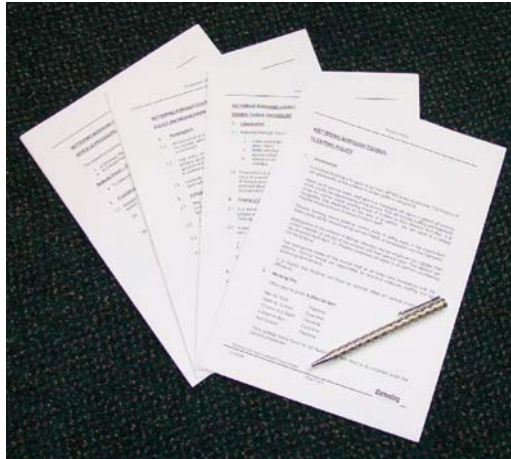
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## PRIORITY 2: SUPPORTING A THRIVING PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR



### Our achievements:

- We have joined DASH (Decent and Safe Homes in the East Midlands) which supports local authorities in the region in their housing renewal work, by providing advice, training and support to officers and private landlords who join the East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme (EMLAS).
- We secured a £20,000 grant from DCLG to recruit a Landlord Liaison Officer for a fixed term to pilot new ways of working in the private rented sector. The current post holder took up his duties in July 2011.
- We placed 425 homeless households in good quality privately rented accommodation between 2007 and 2011, thereby avoiding the need for costly bed and breakfast accommodation, and enabling us to deliver better outcomes to applicants.

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### The challenges we face:

- ***The private rented sector is expanding rapidly in our Borough.*** The stock condition survey highlighted a huge increase in the proportion of privately rented homes in the Borough over the last decade (from 8% to an estimated 23.6% in 2010). However, relatively few private landlords in the Borough have large portfolios of properties, with the majority purchasing just one or two properties for investment purposes, or opting to rent when needing to relocate, as they are unable to sell. These landlords are often inexperienced in the legalities of letting their homes, and benefit from advice and support on a wide range of tenancy issues.
- ***Standards of accommodation are generally good, but standards in the private rented sector could be better.*** Overall, the private rented stock is in much better condition than the national profile, with 26.8% being non-decent compared to 45.4% nationally. However, an estimated 1,488 privately rented properties have Category 1 hazards which a landlord is responsible for addressing, and for which the Council has a duty to take enforcement action if necessary. Similarly, an estimated 2,276 households in the private rented sector live in non-decent homes, and of those, an estimated 1,246 are vulnerable.

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- Privately rented homes will play an increasingly important role in meeting housing needs in the future.** As the supply of new affordable homes developed by housing associations is set to decline due to reductions in Central Government grant needed to build, an increase in the supply of privately rented homes in the Borough has to be welcomed. However, it is ever more vital that conditions in the private rented sector are monitored and improved where necessary to ensure that tenants have decent, safe homes to live in. Also, the sector is still relatively insecure for tenants as the majority of homes are let on six month Assured Shorthold Tenancies, and welfare reform will affect the ability of some to continue to pay their rents with reduced eligibility for Local Housing Allowance.
- Shared accommodation in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) is increasingly in demand.** Kettering currently has 124 HMOs across the Borough, ten of which are subject to mandatory licensing. These properties warrant special attention as they can present the greatest risk to residents, particularly from fire, yet are often occupied by the most vulnerable people in our community. As the Government raised the single room rate from 25 to 35 years in January 2012, single person households aged 35 and under can only claim housing benefit for a single room rather than a self contained flat. Over eighty people have already been affected by the change locally.

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#### **What we will focus on over the next three years to tackle these challenges:**

- ✓ Provide advice and guidance to private landlords on property management and maintenance, to enable them to improve the standard of their accommodation and better understand their rights and responsibilities.
- ✓ Continue to promote good practice in the private rented sector by encouraging landlords to join EMLAS (East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme), to enable them to access training in tenancy management and maintenance, and raise standards in the private rented sector. Accreditation is mandatory for all landlords wishing to accommodate households nominated by the Council from the Keyways housing register.
- ✓ Promote good practice among local lettings agents through membership of ARLA (Association of Residential Lettings Agents).
- ✓ Provide advice, guidance and training to private tenants, to ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities, and promote tenancy sustainment.
- ✓ Explore the development of a Tenant Accreditation scheme to encourage private landlords and lettings agents to consider applicants from the Council's housing register.
- ✓ Develop a programme of consultation with private landlords to explore new and innovative ways of working with landlords to ensure a greater supply of decent, affordable homes for households in housing need in our Borough in the future.
- ✓ Launch a Tenant Finder service to encourage private landlords to allocate their empty homes to applicants on the housing register.

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- ✓ Pilot a housing management service for private landlords to provide a greater supply of decent, affordable homes to applicants on the Council's housing register and generate income to support the future expansion of the service.
- ✓ Complete an inspection of all Houses in Multiple Occupation in our Borough, ensuring completion of risk assessments, licence where mandatory conditions apply, and taking enforcement action to ensure compliance where necessary.
- ✓ In partnership with Northamptonshire Fire Service, ensure that fire risk assessments are completed alongside our own inspections to HMOs, to minimise the risks that this type of accommodation can present.

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### PRIORITY 3: UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF EMPTY HOMES

#### Our achievements:

- We have set up a corporate Empty Homes Steering Group to ensure a joined up approach to tackling empty homes.
- We have worked with a number of housing associations who have purchased long term empty properties in our Borough and refurbished them for letting to applicants on the Council's housing register.
- Most recently, in 2011, we helped Rockingham Forest Housing Association to purchase three long term empty properties requiring extensive refurbishment in our Borough, with capital grant funding of £183,000.

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*Empty property at Grange Road, Kettering (before)*



*And after repairs were completed in autumn 2011.....*



### The challenges we face:

- ***At April 2011, there were 433 long term empty homes in Kettering Borough, ie empty for six months or more.*** Although this is a reduction from two years earlier, when there were 687 long term empties, this nonetheless represents a wasted resource.
- ***Long term empty properties are often in poor condition and blight neighbourhoods, attracting vandalism, fly tipping, and vermin.*** As a result, they are a frequent source of complaints to the Council.
- ***Homes can be left empty for all manner of different reasons:*** they are being kept for investment purposes; are subject to probate following the death of the owner; the owner has left the property and cannot be traced; or the owner has been left the property in a will and is uncertain what to do with it. These wide ranging causes require a whole menu of options, some requiring relatively light touch negotiations, and others substantial capital investment, to bring them back into use.
- ***The Council has only limited financial resources to spend on empty homes,*** ie through Decent Homes Grants to eligible owners who only need minor works completing, and a Social Housing Grant pot (£100,000 in 2011/12) for properties requiring more substantial works and the owner is willing to sell to a housing association for conversion to affordable housing.

### What we will focus on over the next three years to tackle these challenges:

- ✓ Often negotiation with the owner of an empty home is enough to persuade them to bring the property back into use. Therefore, we will continue to monitor long term empty homes and encourage owners to take action to bring their properties back into use in the first instance.
- ✓ If the owner feels unable to bring the property back into use themselves, we will provide the necessary advice to support them in their chosen course to sell or let the property. In the latter case, we will encourage owners to join EMLAS and help identify a prospective tenant whenever possible.
- ✓ Offer Decent Homes Grants to eligible owners with sub standard properties, when they are willing to accept a tenant from the Council's housing register, thereby using empty homes to meet local housing need.
- ✓ Work with housing associations who are able to purchase or lease and repair empty properties and make them available for rental to households on the Council's housing register.
- ✓ Explore other funding streams for empty property work, for example, through the Homes & Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme to tackle long term empties and boost affordable housing supply.
- ✓ Identify funds to use enforcement powers, such as those conveyed in Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which allow the Council to carry out "works in default" when the owner fails to carry out necessary works and recharge them for the costs of the work.

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- ✓ Explore sources of funding to carry out enforced sale, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders where all attempts to bring empty properties back into use voluntarily have failed.
- ✓ Explore ways of partnership working with individual investors and private agencies to bring empty properties back into use.

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## PRIORITY 4: ENABLING PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES TO RETAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE

### Our achievements:

- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) totalling £905,404 have been awarded to 161 elderly and disabled people between 2008 and 2011, allowing them to remain in their own homes.
- During 2011, we have reviewed the way we deliver our DFG service, and from October, launched a new service which takes a housing options approach to DFG applications. This enables Council staff to explore a wide variety of housing solutions with elderly and disabled people to enable them to decide whether an adaptation in their existing home or a move to an alternative home better suited to their needs is appropriate.

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### The challenges we face:

- ***The demand for Disabled Facilities Grants is increasing.*** As the number of elderly people living in the Borough is increasing, the Council is seeing a higher demand for disabled adaptations from elderly home owners and private tenants. The number of DFG applications for younger disabled people including disabled children is also on the rise.
- ***The demand for single storey extensions funded by DFGs is also increasing.*** Those individuals in need of our assistance through a DFG are some of the most vulnerable and disabled in our community. As the caseload increases, so too does the need for single storey home extensions to provide a bedroom and bathing facilities for applicants with the most complex needs. The Council is required to provide eligible applicants with a grant to a maximum of £30,000. As this sum is usually required for home extensions, just a few cases place a considerable burden on already hard pressed finances.

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- **The current capital budget made available for DFGs is insufficient to cover current and future projected demand.** The Council received £215,000 grant funding from central government for the year 2011/12 to fund DFGs. This is the only source of funding allocated to disabled adaptation work in private sector housing. The Council will need to secure funding from alternative sources if it is to continue to meet current and future demand.
- **Funding for new affordable housing has also dramatically reduced.** For several years, the Council has worked with housing association partners to purpose build new homes built to full mobility standards for applicants with more complex needs which cannot be met either by adapting their existing home or another social rented home in the Borough. However, public funds for new affordable housing allocated to housing associations have also substantially reduced from 2011/12. As the anticipated number of new affordable homes built in our Borough is now falling dramatically as a result, this option is increasingly unviable.



**What we will focus on over the next three years to tackle these challenges:**

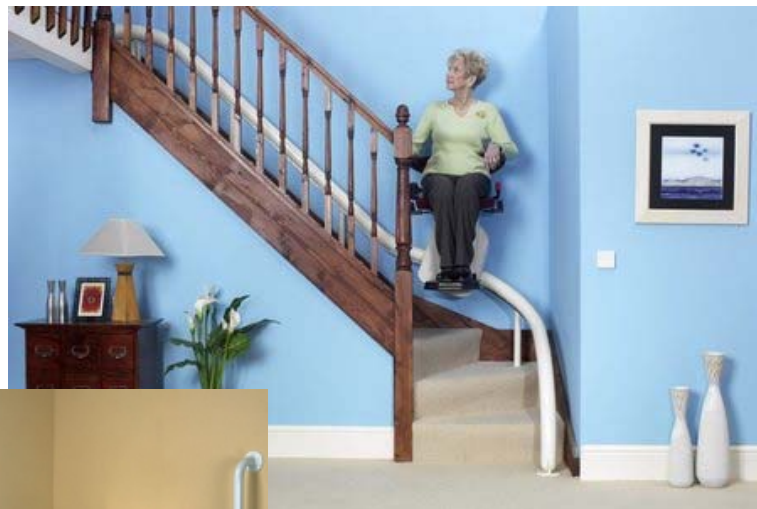
- ✓ Following the recent launch of our new housing options service to DFG clients, we will continue to explore ways of expanding this service, to provide a range of housing solutions for applicants needing adaptations including a move to other types of accommodation when desired, including the Council's own housing stock.
- ✓ Review our Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure that adapted properties which are no longer needed can readily be released, and applicants in need of accommodation with adaptations can be matched to properties best suited to them.

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- ✓ Review our procurement processes for adaptations, to establish where we can streamline and achieve better value for money, for example, through framework contracts.
- ✓ In partnership with Kettering General Hospital, look at ways to speed up the discharge of patients from hospital who are unable to return home without the installation of adaptations, and reduce bed blocking.
- ✓ Explore alternative funding streams for disabled adaptations to cope with increasing demand for DFGs, eg via loans, equity release or other charitable schemes, and joint funding arrangements with housing associations.
- ✓ Establish ways of recycling equipment such as stair lifts when no longer needed to reduce waste and costs.



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## RESOURCES

The actions set out in this Strategy to improve private sector housing in Kettering require significant financial resources. The efficient and effective use of resources is fundamental to ensuring that local people live in good quality homes which meet their needs and are located in pleasant, safe and sustainable communities.

The Council uses two main funding streams for housing – capital and revenue. Capital funding is largely obtained from capital receipts such as central government grants for Decent Homes and mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants. The main source of revenue funding is from Council Tax income, and is used largely to fund the day to day operation of the Council's Private Sector Housing team.

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The table below sets out current and future use of the Council's capital and revenue resources to improve private sector house conditions, and meet the need for adaptations from the most vulnerable people in our community. Other sources of funding such as the Affordable Housing Framework, allocated by the Homes and Communities Agency, to fund larger scale initiatives such as the empty homes are also outlined in this section.

Resource	Funding in 2010/11 and beyond	How can this resource be used?
Decent Homes Grants	£301,000 in 2011/12 Funding in subsequent years from carry forward of under spend in 2011/12 only	Decent Homes Grants are awarded to eligible owner occupiers to help them bring their homes up to the Government's minimum standard, tackle Category 1 hazards and improve thermal comfort.  For a number of years, Decent Homes Grants have been funded by Central Government, but the last allocation was received in 2010/11. Due to Government cuts, no further grants are anticipated, and this year's allocation comprises an under spend from 2010/11 only.  It is anticipated that this allocation of funds will be spent by 2012/13 latest, after which the Council will need to consider whether to continue funding Decent Homes Grants from its own resources in order to continue this initiative.  At present, Decent Homes Grants are also awarded to eligible private landlords in return for nominations rights.  The maximum grant awarded is £5,000 per applicant.
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	£215,000 per annum from 2011/12	The Council's Financial Strategy identifies a General Fund budget of £215,000 per annum for the next three years to provide both mandatory and discretionary Disabled

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Resource	Funding in 2010/11 and beyond	How can this resource be used?
		<p>Facilities Grants to elderly and/or disabled residents living in private sector homes.</p> <p>This allocation, which is received from Central Government, is vital to tackle the increasing demand for adaptations, but will need to be increased to a minimum of £500,000 per annum by Central Government and/or the Council if we are to keep pace with rising demand.</p> <p>The maximum grant awarded under the mandatory scheme is £30,000 per applicant.</p>
HomeMove Grants	Up to £25,000 per annum (Included in DFG allocation)	<p>Introduced in 2011/12, HomeMove Grants are provided to fund more cost effective alternatives to providing a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. For example, the Grant covers relocation costs enabling a disabled applicant to move to an alternative home that is more appropriate for their immediate and long term needs, as well as any adaptation required to the applicant's new home, provided the move (together with any costs of adapting the new home) is cost effective compared to remaining in their own home.</p> <p>The maximum grant paid is £6,000 per applicant.</p>
Energy Efficiency Grants	£25,000 per annum from 2008 to 2011 (Nil from 2012/13 onwards)	<p>The Warm Front scheme installs insulation and heating measures up to the value of £3,500, or £6,000 where oil central heating or alternative low carbon technologies are recommended. Warm Front is aimed at people on certain disability or income-related benefits.</p> <p>In recent years, where the cost of work exceeds the amount of grant available, the Council has provided a top up grant to a maximum of £1,000. However, scheme will be brought to an end once existing funds have been exhausted.</p>
Local Authority Social Housing Grant	£110,000 for 2012/13 only (This budget will not be available in	<p>This allocation has been used to provide additional affordable housing in the Borough. It has also been used to 'top up' grant to a housing association if they purchase an empty property and convert it</p>

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Resource	Funding in 2010/11 and beyond	How can this resource be used?
	future years)	into an affordable home. This is an expensive development option for Housing Associations, compared with new build development, and are reliant on a co-operative owner being willing to sell their empty property. Therefore, long term leasing options will need to be explored as this would be potentially cheaper and more palatable to owners who wish to retain ownership of their asset.
Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) funding committed by Government to tackle empty homes nationally	Minimum £100m for 2012 – 2015 <u>nationally</u>	<p>The HCA provides funding for new affordable housing via Housing Associations. £100m of the 2011-2015 budget has been committed to tackling empty homes. This money is included in the bids that Registered Providers (including housing associations) make to the HCA for funding for the 2011-15 period.</p> <p>Providers will be expected to give an estimate of the number of new properties they will provide by refurbishing empty homes in 2011-2015. The limitations of this approach are as above. Where housing associations are able to purchase homes, this will either require the co-operation of the owner or the use of an enforcement tool such as a Compulsory Purchase Order. They may be more likely to focus on regeneration areas, containing many empty properties, rather than individual properties as it provides better value for money in return for the grant.</p>
Officer time	2012 – 15	The Private Sector Housing team comprises six members of staff covering: DFGs and private sector housing standards (x 2); surveying for disabled adaptations (x 1); liaison with private landlords (x 1); management (x 1); and team administration (x 1). However, as 3 posts are paid for from external funding streams, these post holders are employed on fixed term contracts terminating in 2012 (x 1) and 2014 (x 2).

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The current economic recession and commitment by Central Government to reduce the national deficit has already had a significant impact on our ability to deliver

services not just to home owners and private tenants, but also to those who come to the Council in housing need.

Therefore, meeting increasing demand for our housing services will be challenging as traditional sources of funding from government sources have either ended or been substantially reduced.

### What are the main resource issues for the future?

- The level of resources for Decent Homes Grants does not enable the Council to tackle the level of disrepair and poor housing conditions identified in the private sector house condition survey. Therefore, we need to explore other policy tools such as loans and equity release to complement our grants policy to benefit the wider community.
- Grant funds provided by Kettering Borough Council for Disabled Facilities Grants are insufficient to meet the increasing demand for adaptations for the elderly and/or disabled. Therefore, in addition to assisting applicants into alternative accommodation, we also need to investigate alternative funding streams to top up grants received from Central Government to ensure that we continue to provide mandatory DFGs and fulfil our legal requirements.
- As the amount of public subsidy to fund new building of affordable homes has dropped dramatically from 2011, the number of new affordable home completed in our Borough is set to drop from over 200 per annum for the last four years, to just 82 new homes in 2011/12. However, as a growing number of local people are struggling to meet mortgage and rent payments, the numbers who come to us for advice and assistance continues to increase. Therefore, we have to explore alternative routes to good quality, decent homes from within the existing housing stock if we are to prevent increasing numbers presenting in a housing crisis.
- We also need to explore new ways of financing our services, for example, by generating income from the services we provide from within our Private Sector Housing team. This will be vital not only to continue to provide services at current levels, but also to ensure that we are able to continue to develop services that are responsive to the changing environment in which we are working. Potential income streams include providing housing management services to landlords, and charging landlords who fail to comply to informal requests to rectify disrepair when taking enforcement action subsequently.

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## SECTION 4: MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy is intended to be valid for a period of three years. However, it is a dynamic document that will be subject to review as and when new intelligence becomes available. It is supported by Action Plans that determine how priorities will be developed into measurable outputs and outcomes. Our Action Plans are outlined in Section 5 of this strategy.

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We will keep this strategy under regular review and evaluate our progress against these Action Plans to evaluate how well the Council is doing in meetings its strategic objectives for private sector housing. Progress against specific strategic objectives will also be monitored through:

- Corporate Performance Clinics
- Housing Service Plan
- Disabled Facilities Grant Best Practice Group

However, successful delivery of the strategy will depend on the combined efforts of a range of stakeholders and partners, as well as the Council's own capacity to deliver in both the provision of direct services and in its strategic enabling role.

Our current Action Plans set out each task, target completion date, the outcome, how we will measure success, resources to complete the task (including cash, staff and/or skills invested in the project) and the lead officer responsible.

## SECTION 5: ACTION PLAN

Action plans for each of our four strategic priorities for private sector housing in the Borough are detailed as follows:

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**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 – ENSURING DECENT, SAFE AND HEALTHY HOMES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Task	Outcome	How We Will Measure Success	Resources	Target Date	Lead Officer
Agree and promote service standards for private sector housing complaints received from tenants, landlords and owner occupiers	Procedures in place and published	100% of customer complaints recorded and completed within the agreed timeframe	Council staff time and IT	July 2012	Private Sector Housing Manager
Review and revise the Council's Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy	Policy adopted by the Council's Executive Committee	<u>Raised standards of management and maintenance in the private rented sector, resulting in a reduction in the number of complaints</u>	Council staff time	Sept 2012	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Review and revise information provided to owners, private landlords and their tenants	Suite of information leaflets produced and available on the Council's website	Feedback from service users	Council staff time	Sept 2012	Private Sector Housing Manager
<u>Explore funding streams to replace Decent Homes Grants</u>	<u>Additional resources obtained to help local residents improve their homes</u>	<u>The Council is able to continue to intervene in the private sector to raise housing standards and increase the proportion of homes meeting the Decent Homes standard locally</u>	<u>Council staff time</u>	<u>Dec 2012</u>	<u>Housing Strategy &amp; Options Manager</u>

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**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 – SUPPORTING A THRIVING RENTED SECTOR**

Task	Outcome	How We Will Measure Success	Resources	Target Date	Lead Officer
<u>Promote accreditation to both private landlords and lettings agents</u>	<u>EMLAS and ARLA accreditation promoted through Landlords Forum, Council website, correspondence etc</u>	<u>More than 60 landlords and lettings agents in the Borough will have joined an approved accreditation scheme</u>	<u>Council staff time</u>	<u>July 2012</u>	<u>Landlord Liaison Officer</u>
<u>Provide advice and guidance to private landlords on management and maintenance tailored to their individual needs</u>	<u>Systems in place to deliver tailored advice including verbal advice over the telephone, and in writing through information leaflets available through the Council's website etc</u>	<u>Reduction in the number of complaints from landlords and tenants established through quarterly monitoring reports</u>	<u>Council staff time and IT</u>	<u>April 2013</u>	<u>Private Sector Housing Manager</u>
<u>Provide advice and guidance to private tenants on rights and responsibilities during a tenancy</u>	<u>Systems in place to delivered tailored advice including verbal advice over the telephone, and in writing, through information leaflets available through the Council's website etc</u>	<u>Reduction in the number of complaints from landlords and tenants established through quarterly monitoring reports</u>	<u>Council staff time and IT</u>	<u>April 2013</u>	<u>Private Sector Housing Manager</u>
<u>Promote tenancy training and life skills to private tenants</u>	<u>Tenants better prepared to sustain their tenancies into the medium longer term</u>	<u>Reduction in tenancy failures in the private rented sector which result in approaches for help from the Council</u>	<u>Staff time from the Council and other partner agencies</u>	<u>April 2013</u>	<u>Housing Strategy Officer (Policy &amp; Performance)</u>
<u>Launch a tenant accreditation scheme</u>	<u>Incentive for private landlords to accept households from the Council's housing register into their homes</u>	<u>Increase in the number of local households in need rehoused in the private rented sector, resulting in a reduction in General Fund expenditure on temporary accommodation</u>	<u>Council staff time</u>	<u>July 2012</u>	<u>Landlord Liaison Officer</u>

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<u>Conduct a feasibility study into the development of management services to private landlords</u>	<u>Incentive for private landlords to accept households from the housing register into their homes</u>	<u>Increase in the number of local households in need rehoused in the private rented sector, resulting in a reduction in General Fund expenditure on temporary accommodation</u>	<u>Council staff time</u>	<u>July 2012</u>	<u>Landlord Liaison Officer</u>
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**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 – UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF EMPTY HOMES**

Task	Outcome	How We Will Measure Success	Resources	Target Date	Lead Officer
<u>Conduct a regular review of empty homes in the Borough, contacting owners where appropriate</u>	<u>Owners provided with advice and guidance on bringing their empty homes back into use</u>	<u>Reduction in the number of long term empties across the Borough</u>	<u>Council staff time</u>	<u>Ongoing</u>	<u>Housing Strategy Officer (Policy &amp; Performance)</u>
<u>Bid to the Homes and Communities Agency for a proportion of the £100m funding available for empty homes from 2011 to 2015</u>	<u>Funding obtained to allow either purchase and repair or lease and repair of empty homes</u>	<u>Funds secured from the HCA to bring back at least 12 empty homes in the Borough between 2011-2015</u>	<u>Council and housing association staff</u> <u>Capital funding from housing association reserves or loans from private finance institutions funded by rents</u>	<u>Bidding deadline Jan 2012</u>	<u>Housing Strategy Officer (Enabling)</u>
<u>Investigate additional sources of funding for empty homes</u>	<u>Additional resources available to enable us to take a range of different actions in order to bring empty properties back into use</u>	<u>Additional funding obtained</u>	<u>Council staff time and partner agencies</u>	<u>Dec 2012</u>	<u>Housing Strategy &amp; Options Manager</u>

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**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 – ENABLING PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES TO RETAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE**

<u>Task</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	<u>How We Will Measure Success</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Target Date</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>
<u>Promote HomeMove to owner occupiers and private tenants with physical disabilities</u>	<u>More information on housing options to disabled people, enabling them to move to more suitable accommodation if desired</u>	<u>Increase in the number of DFG applicants who relocate to more suitable accommodation</u>	<u>Council staff time providing one to one advice and support</u>  <u>HomeMove Grant up to a maximum of £6,000 per applicant to cover removal costs and adaptations in their new home</u>	<u>Sept 2012</u>	<u>Private Sector Housing Manager</u>
<u>Review and adopt the revised Housing Allocations Scheme which sets out eligibility criteria and priority for Council and housing association homes in the Borough</u>	<u>Housing Allocations Scheme adopted by the Council's Executive Committee</u>	<u>Increase in the number of DFG applicants able to access Council and housing association homes more quickly</u>	<u>Council and housing association staff time</u>  <u>Capital budget for changes to IT system</u>  <u>Supply of social rented homes owned and managed by the Council and housing associations across the Borough</u>	<u>July 2012</u>	<u>Housing Strategy &amp; Options Manager</u>
<u>Review the procurement process currently in place for disabled adaptations provided for private sector residents</u>	<u>New contractual arrangements in place</u>	<u>Adaptations provided through a cheaper and more cost effective process</u>	<u>Council and housing association staff time</u>  <u>Providers of specialist equipment and building services</u>	<u>Mar 2013</u>	<u>Private Sector Housing Manager</u>

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<u>Investigate recycling of specialist equipment to maximise usage</u>	<u>Recycling scheme in place</u>	<u>Increase in the amount of specialist equipment which is reused</u>	<u>Northamptonshire DFG Best Practice Group</u> <u>Occupational Therapists</u> <u>Equipment providers</u> <u>Funds for relocation of equipment from one property to another</u>	<u>July 2013</u>	<u>Private Sector Housing Manager</u>
<u>Investigate additional funding streams to pay for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants</u>	<u>Applicants receive a responsive service and adaptations installed without delay</u>	<u>Waiting time for adaptations reduced to a maximum of 6 months</u>	<u>Council, Occupational Therapy, Supporting People</u>	<u>Dec 2012</u>	<u>Housing Strategy &amp; Options Manager</u>

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	DESCRIPTION
<u>Affordable housing</u>	<u>Housing at a price below private market prices, which includes social rented housing and shared ownership.</u>
<u>Bed and breakfast</u>	<u>Temporary accommodation, usually not self contained, used though not ideally suited for homeless people.</u>
<u>Category 1 hazard</u>	<u>Hazards identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System are split into two categories: Category 1 and Category 2. Category 1 hazards are the most serious, and place a duty on Councils to rectify them.</u>
<u>Choice based lettings</u>	<u>Known as Keyways, this system allows applicants on the housing register to bid for vacant Council and housing association properties on the Council's website.</u>
<u>Decent Homes</u>	<u>A standard that all social housing was required to meet by 2010, it includes energy efficiency, central heating and the age of kitchen and bathroom furnishings. Councils must also aim to ensure that private housing lived in by "vulnerable" households is brought up to the same standard.</u>
<u>Disabled Facilities Grant</u>	<u>A grant towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable a disabled person to continue to live in their own home.</u>
<u>Housing Benefit</u>	<u>A state benefit administered by local authorities to pay all or part of the cost of rented housing for those on low incomes.</u>
<u>Homes &amp; Communities Agency (HCA)</u>	<u>The national housing and regeneration agency for England, which administers funds from central government to support the development of new affordable homes, improvements of existing social homes, and regeneration of land.</u>
<u>House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)</u>	<u>A house that is occupied by three or more unrelated persons who do not form a single household.</u>
<u>Housing Association</u>	<u>A not for profit organisation that works with the Council to provide homes for people in housing need. As well as developing land and building new affordable homes, housing associations undertake a landlord function by managing and maintaining their own housing stock.</u>

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<u>Housing Health &amp; Safety Rating System (HHSRS)</u>	<u>A new risk assessment tool used to assess the potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties. Brought in by new legislation in 2006, the HHSRS replaces the old “fitness standard”.</u>
<u>Homelessness duty</u>	<u>Housing authorities must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for people who have a priority need under the terms of the homelessness legislation, if they are eligible for assistance and unintentionally homeless. This is known as the main homelessness duty. The housing authority can provide accommodation from its own housing stock, or arrange for it to be provided through another landlord such as a housing association or landlord in the private rented sector.</u>
<u>Keyways Housing Register</u>	<u>Sometimes called the “waiting list”, this is the register through which households apply for social rented homes owned and managed by the Council and housing associations across the Keyways Partnership Area.</u>
<u>Keyways Partnership Area</u>	<u>Geographical area covering the local authority districts of Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough.</u>
<u>Local Housing Allowance (LHA)</u>	<u>A Local Housing Allowance is a new way of calculating and paying Housing Benefit for people who rent from a private landlord.</u>
<u>Registered Providers</u>	<u>These are not for profit organisations that provide affordable housing, including the Council and housing associations.</u>
<u>Supporting People Grant</u>	<u>A funding stream administered by the County Council in Northamptonshire, it pays for housing related support to vulnerable people, giving them the opportunity to improve the quality of their lives by providing a stable environment. It also provides funding for Home Improvement Agencies to install disabled adaptations for elderly and disabled people in the private sector.</u>
<u>Sustainable communities</u>	<u>Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe, well planned, built and run, an offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.</u>
<u>Sustainable Community Plan</u>	<u>Sets out the Council’s overarching vision for the Borough</u>
<u>Vulnerable household</u>	<u>Defined under the Decent Homes standard as a household in receipt of at least one of the principal means tested benefits including Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Working Tax Credits.</u>

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The semi structured interviews with officers on renewal activity and intervention including grants and enforcement activity revealed a number of technical, process and skills development issues that could be improved with regard to undertaking formal interventions – particularly with respect to dealing with complaints about poor housing and dealing with HMO licensing. These are detailed in a separate and confidential report intended to inform service improvements.

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, semi structured interviews with officers from the Home Improvement Agency regarding (DFG's), conversations with Supporting People regarding (DFG's), conversations with the Manager of the Occupation Therapy Service regarding (DFG's), conversations and meetings where appropriate with Foundations and best practice local authorities regarding DFG's, and int		
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Response rates were generally quite poor but generally speaking most agreed or strongly agreed with the objectives and actions. Appendix A illustrates the objectives identified by officers and the proposed actions to deliver those objectives:

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**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 – IMPROVING WARMTH AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

Task	Outcome	How We Will Measure Success	
Develop extra care services in one or more of the Council's existing sheltered housing schemes	Ensure that sheltered housing owned by the Council continues to meet the needs of elderly people locally	One existing sheltered housing scheme providing accommodation and services for frail elderly people locally	Council of housing s Funds to improven facilities SP funds services

Develop a supported housing scheme for teenage parents	New build housing scheme with support completed	Scheme built and fully occupied	Housing RSL staff manage SP funds services
Develop an additional 10 housing units for adults with a learning disability	Additional units provided with on-site and/or floating support	Units completed and fully occupied by target group (either as stand alone scheme or integrated within larger general needs schemes)	Housing RSL resco SP funds services
Launch special needs forums for vulnerable groups including older people and people with mental health problems	Specialist groups able to identify gaps in accommodation/services and lobby to target resources accordingly	Forums launched and regular programme of events in place	Staff at K partner s
Complete new procedures for dealing with Disabled Facilities Grants	Ensure compliance with current Government guidance, and reduce the length of time people wait for adaptations to be completed locally.	New procedures in place and time taken to process Disabled Facilities Grants reducing	Staff at K Occupati Disabled

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**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5 – ENABLING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO RETAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE**

Task	Outcome	How We Will Measure Success	

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