

SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing Needs Report

2003

Fit for Purpose



HOUSING SERVICES

Department of
Social Care



This study report was commissioned by the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council as Local Planning Authority. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the report is factually accurate, its contents, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are entirely those of the consultant who carried out the study. The content should not be held to represent the views of the Borough Council. It is therefore being made available solely for information purposes as a background technical document forming part of the evidence base for the proposed policies to be included within the Local Development Framework for Southend-on-Sea.

Document Accessibility

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- at www.southend.gov.uk
- CD Rom format;
- in alternative formats, including different languages, braille, the spoken word, large print, and tactile mapping.

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NEEDS ANALYSIS

- ASSESSING CURRENT AND LIKELY FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS

This report is concerned with the analysis of housing needs. It demonstrates a requirement for additional affordable housing and investment in private sector renewal and the Council's own stock. The report is closely linked to the Housing Strategy, the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Housing Action Plan. These are separate documents all relating to the Council's housing responsibilities.

VIEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

The needs, wishes and aspirations of the Borough's residents are central to the development of an effective Housing Strategy.

A Tenants' Survey carried out for the Council in November/December 2000 provided a wealth of insight into the views of local communities. Overall, satisfaction is high with 79% of tenants being satisfied with the overall housing service provided by the Council. Satisfaction was found to increase with the age of the tenant and the length of the tenancy. Tenants were less likely to be satisfied with the overall service if they are in full time employment, from an ethnic minority and/or have a disability that limits activity. The Council has set targets to improve tenants' satisfaction from all groups and will continuously review its service to ensure that both corporate and public objectives are achieved. A further Tenants' Survey is currently underway (2003) to gauge satisfaction with their homes and the services received from the Council.

The Council undertakes considerable consultation with its tenants and residents, in order to ensure that the services provided meet their needs and expectations, including:

- Tenants Information Exchange Day (TIE-In) surveys
- Leaseholders' and tenants' surveys
- Focus Group meetings
- Tenant Associations, Federation and Forum meetings
- Working groups
- BME groups

This consultation identifies those areas where tenants have most interest and concerns. The following priorities are apparent:

Estate Management Issues

- Improvements against anti-social behaviour
- Improvements in the removal of abandoned cars
- Cleanliness of estates and communal areas
- Improved parking facilities
- Improved security

Repairs & Maintenance

- Double glazing
- Improved kitchens and bathrooms
- New front and back doors
- Safety issues (eg improved security, lighting, car parking)
- More storage space
- Improvements in the time taken to carry out repairs

Elderly and/or Disabled

- Improved bathing facilities (eg walk in showers)
- Help with interior decorations
- Eye or split level cookers
- General repair improvements

Leaseholders

- Condition and cleanliness of communal areas
- Improvements against anti-social behaviour
- Reporting repairs
- Value for money within the service charge
- Leaseholders' rights

Specific groups have raised particular issues. For example, tenants raised the possibility of carrying out works over and above those included within the Decent Homes standard. The Council has responded by setting up a Repairs Panel of tenants and officers to consider bids from tenant groups for improvements relating to safety, security and environmental works on their estates. The Landlords' and Property Agents' Forum believed the accommodation needs of young people required highlighting. A survey of unfit private properties conducted in 1997 found that most were occupied by vulnerable groups of residents including the elderly, single parent families and single persons. These households do not have access to appropriate funding to enable essential repairs and improvements to be carried out, as they are often on low incomes and in receipt of some type of benefit. Additionally, there is a significantly high proportion of elderly and disabled residents within the Borough (23%) and therefore the demand for adaptations to dwellings remains high.

A variety of issues were raised by voluntary and statutory agencies working in the borough at a Homelessness Strategy Day held by the Council to identify the current needs and resources available for local homelessness services. Among the shortfalls identified were the availability of services for 16-18 year olds and mental health service users, a need for improved communication between agencies, and an increase in emergency, temporary, independent and supported housing.

Perceived levels of crime, overcrowding, the state of repair of their property, access to housing and advice and an awareness of local authority and housing association services were the main issues arising from the Essex Equality and Diversity Project for the Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the Southend area.

The Council's surveys and consultation confirm that housing issues are of key importance to the residents of the Borough. The provision of decent, affordable housing is a key issue that must be addressed before local people can involve themselves in their community. For example, a needs assessment of the Borough's older residents indicates many will require a variety of support systems to enable them to remain in their own homes. The fear of crime is a significant factor in some central wards of the Borough so home security is an issue in these areas. The provision of appropriate housing solutions and a range of support measures are key to responding to these needs.

HOUSING NEEDS

Housing Needs Study 2002

In 2002, the Council commissioned Fordham Research Ltd to review the housing need and affordability in the Borough until 2007. The study covered all areas and tenure groups and provides a robust indication of the scale and type of housing required to satisfy the identified needs.

A crucial part of the housing needs study is an assessment of households' ability to afford private sector housing. The Local Market Study consulted local estate and letting agents in order to provide an estimate of the minimum (entry-level) prices of housing in the area:

Minimum Prices/Rents in the Southend-on-Sea Borough		
Property Size	Minimum price	Minimum rent (£/month)
1 Bedroom	£58,500	£330
2 Bedrooms	£69,500	£450
3 Bedrooms	£98,000	£590
4 Bedrooms	£141,500	£710

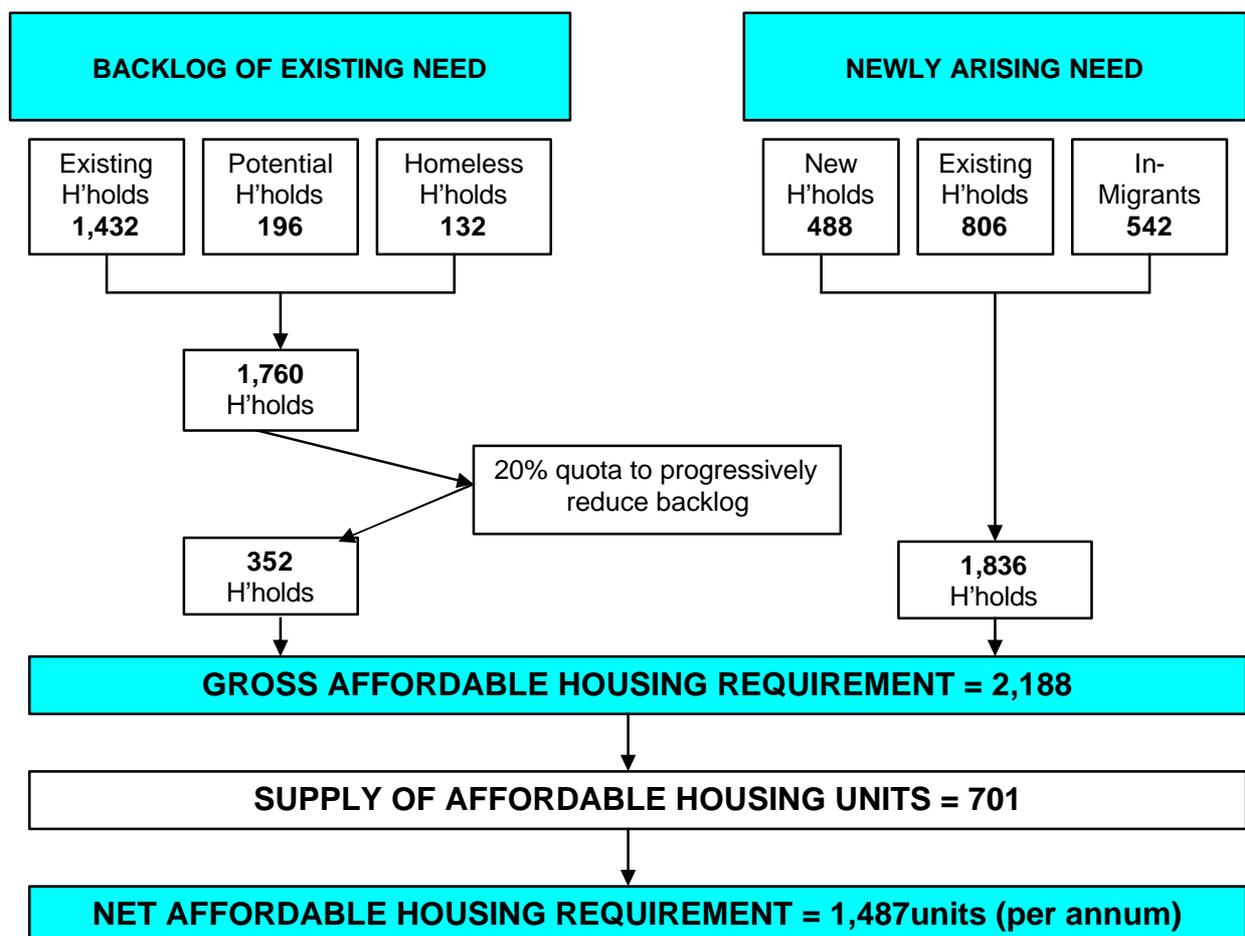
* The minimum purchase prices were 13% - 26% less than average prices in the area.

The study estimates that the average earned household income is £20,793 per annum (excluding any benefits). On the basis that a mortgage provider will lend three times the household's income, any household (including a family) wishing to purchase a property could only afford a 1-bedroom property. Similarly, a family wishing to lease a 3-bedroom property would have to spend 41% of their monthly income on rent.

The study analyses housing need through the following stages:

- Backlog of existing need
- Newly arising need
- Supply of affordable units
- Overall affordable housing requirement

The following diagram provides an estimate of the total requirement for additional affordable housing to meet housing need within the Borough, as indicated by the Final Report (May 2003):



These results indicate a total requirement for new affordable housing over the next five years of 7,435 dwellings. The study also assesses the requirement for additional affordable housing by size, considering both size requirement and potential demand. The main shortfalls are for:

- 50% Two bedroom properties (748 per annum)
- 29% Three bedroom properties (429 per annum)

The area of the Borough with the highest shortfall of affordable housing as a proportion of existing households is Milton at 5.5%. Milton is also the most deprived ward in the Borough.

The need for affordable housing has increased significantly since the 1996 Housing Needs Study, which estimated a requirement for an additional 600 affordable dwellings between 1996 and 2001 (compared with 7,435 affordable dwellings between 2002 and 2007). There also appears to be a higher demand for larger size accommodation than that predicted in the 1996 Study.

The 2002 Study also examines the housing requirements of households with special needs, such as people with a physical, learning, sensory or mental health disability, the frail elderly and vulnerable young people. Of all the special needs' households, approximately 53% state that there is a need for improvements to their current accommodation and/or services.

The consultants concluded that the Council will need to maximise the availability of affordable housing from all available sources (including newbuild, acquisitions, conversions, etc). On this basis, there is justification for considering a 50% affordable housing requirement on all eligible sites to help meet the level of housing need identified. The Planning Inspectors for the London Plan have confirmed a 50% level and the level of need in Southend is considered by the consultants to be up to outer London standards.

The consultants have estimated that a 50% requirement on sites of 15+ dwellings would enable the Council to achieve 1,088 new affordable dwellings over the plan period. This issue will be addressed when the Council's Local Borough Plan undergoes review in 2004.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

Homelessness - The Statistical Evidence

The buoyancy of the local housing market continues to have a large impact upon the levels of homelessness within the Borough with movement in house sales reducing the availability of private sector accommodation. With the exception of 1998/99 and 2001/02 (where figures were similar to the previous year), Southend has experienced a year-on-year increase in homeless applicants since 1997. The second quarter of 2003/04 has seen a 82% increase in homeless applicants as a whole compared to the same quarter last year.

Year	Number of applications for assistance to LA	% Increase on previous year	Number of persons in B&B at year end	% Increase on previous year
1997/1998	291	+32%	3	+300%
1998/1999	290	- 1%	3	0%
1999/2000	377	+30%	21	+600%
2000/2001	457	+21%	50	+138%
2001/2002	454	0%	21*	See note below
2002/2003	513	+13%	66	+214%

* 21 is the year-end figure following a peak figure of 53 in December 2001. The reduction is a short-term trend brought about by a recent increase in nominations to RSL developments.

Duties placed on Local Authorities by the Housing Act 1996 and the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, have led to a "silting up" of suitable accommodation within the Borough. Tackling the homelessness situation has become more challenging with the introduction of additional duties placed upon Local Authorities by the Homelessness Act 2002. The result has been an increase in the number of single people presenting as homeless, many of whom have mental health issues or are dual diagnosis with drug and/or alcohol problems. Households that are required to leave shorthold tenancies continues to be the main reason for making a homeless application (ie 29% of accepted applicants in 2002/03) and it has been necessary to pre-book bed and breakfast accommodation in order for the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities to these people.

The Council works in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to prevent homelessness - for example, HARP Day and Night Services which is a merger of the Southend Day Centre for the Homeless and the Emergency Night Shelter. The Day Service assists some 2,500 people every year and the Night Service assisted around 450 people in 2002/03. The HARP Contact and Tenancy Sustainment Team (CATS Team) provides an outreach service and undertakes tenancy sustainment to resettle rough sleepers and provide support to ensure the Government's Rough Sleepers target is met.

Needs of Different Groups

Families

The need for accommodation for homeless families has increased considerably over the last three years (with homeless acceptances increasing from 91 in 1999/2000 to 121 in 2000/01 to 157 in 2001/02 and 230 in 2002/03). The majority of these families have come from the private rented sector. This is a change from previous years whereby Southend had a large number of applications from young women with babies.

Single People

In May 2000, there were 16 people sleeping rough. Evidence from counts undertaken in each local authority area throughout England showed Southend to have had the equal 30th highest concentration of rough sleeping. This evidence established that relatively there was a major problem of insecurely housed people within the Borough. More recently, a count undertaken in May 2001 revealed that there was only 1 person sleeping rough in the Borough. The count ensured Southend had reached its target to reduce the number of rough sleepers by two-thirds by 2002. However, information gathered by the Contact and Assessment Team (CAT) shows that there is still a problem with people who are insecurely housed in the Borough together with a continued influx of rough sleepers.

There are difficulties in rehousing people within the private rented sector emanating from the buoyancy of the local housing market and the attitudes of local landlords. Consequently, it is essential that existing relationships are built and developed in order to ensure continued support for these groups of people. The CAT Team and the Council operate rent deposit guarantee schemes, with the Council scheme pledging 8 weeks advance rent and up to 4 weeks rent as a guarantee against damage. The Council also operates a tenancy grant scheme designed to encourage private sector landlords to house homeless applicants on a fixed term Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

The homelessness situation in Southend attracted Government funding through the Homelessness Action Programme and the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative. Outreach work was carried out to identify the extent and the detail of the problem and Tenancy Sustainment work was undertaken to resettle rough sleepers and provide support.

In accordance with requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council has conducted a review of homelessness in the Borough and produced a strategy based on the results. The Homelessness Strategy 2002-08 focuses on prevention rather than crisis management and incorporates an action plan that will be robustly monitored with a subsequent review of the strategy taking place in 2005.

THE HOUSING REGISTER

Demand for Council / RSL Accommodation

The Council's various Housing Registers are the most significant and direct method of meeting housing need in the Borough. They provide clear quantitative evidence of the level of housing need for those who cannot afford to buy or rent housing on the open market.

The number of applications for inclusion on the Council's Housing Registers is an indicator of demand. The following table shows the applications received in 2002/03 compared with 2001/02.

Register	2001/02	Monthly average	2002/03	Monthly average	Percent change
Housing	1497	124.75	1459	121.58	- 2.54%
Transfer	369	30.75	348	29.00	- 5.69%
Housing Association Transfer	88	7.33	88	7.33	Nil
Incoming HOMES	78	6.50	91	7.58	+ 16.67%
Outgoing HOMES	124	10.33	116	9.67	- 6.45%
TOTAL	2156	179.67	2102	175.17	- 2.50%

The Housing Register, Council Transfer Register and outgoing HOMES applications have all decreased over the last year whereas the Housing Association Transfer Register applications have remained static and the Incoming HOMES applications have increased. Overall, the number of applications decreased by 2.50% compared with the previous year.

The following table gives details of the numbers on the Registers at 31st March 2003.

Register	As at 31/3/02	As at 31/3/03	Percent change
Housing Register	1,977	2,272	+ 14.92%
SBC Transfer Register	466	522	+ 12.02%
HA Transfer Register	99	136	+ 37.37%
Incoming HOMES	23	15	- 34.78%
TOTAL	2,565	2,945	+ 14.81%

The numbers on each Register (except the Incoming HOMES Register) increased significantly compared with the previous year. There were no major changes in the eligibility criteria for acceptance onto the Registers and the overall increase in the numbers on the waiting list of 14.81% followed increases of 31.78% from 1999/2000 to 2000/01 and 11.86% from 2000/01 to 2001/02. Hence, although there was a decrease in the number of applications received, the number of applicants waiting for housing in the Borough continued to increase.

The rise in the number of applicants on the Housing Register from 1,264 at 31st March 2000 to 2,272 at 31st March 2003 (ie an increase of 79.75% in three years) is of considerable concern to the Council. Furthermore, this increase is mirrored by an increasing number of homeless households approaching the Council for assistance (see below), particularly as a result of their loss of private rented housing. Many landlords in the private rented sector are no longer willing to let property to tenants who will be reliant on Housing Benefit, and there is evidence to suggest that many properties formerly in the private rented sector are being sold, and lost to the sector. The reduced affordability of such accommodation and the continuing increase in house prices could account for much of the growth in the numbers on the Registers.

The following table shows the demand for various sizes of accommodation, across the Registers, at 31st March 2003.

Property Type	Housing Register	Transfer Register	HA Transfer Register	Incoming HOMES	Total
Sheltered Studio flat	146	77	8	7	238
Sheltered 1 bed	31	38	2	5	76
Gen needs Studio flat	668	73	10	1	752
Gen needs 1 bed	157	33	7	0	197
Gen needs 2 bed	659	121	36	1	817
Gen needs 3 bed	416	92	42	0	550
Gen needs 3 bed Parlour / 4 bed	116	50	24	1	191
Unclassified	79	38	7	0	124
TOTAL	2,272	522	136	15	2,945

The demand for general needs studio flats (for single people) has increased from 631 at the end of 2001/02 (ie by 19.18% over the last year) reflecting the problems of homelessness amongst single people. The numbers on the Registers for all types of family accommodation have also increased over the last year (two beds up from 715 (14.27%); three beds up from 410 (34.15%) and three bed parlour and four beds up from 165 (15.76%)). It is significant that there have been no new Housing Association developments on which large numbers of family-sized properties have been let to applicants from the Council's Housing Registers over the past year.

For the purposes of allocating accommodation from the Council's Housing Registers, the Borough is currently split into eight areas. The following table shows the demand for all types of accommodation in the various areas, as at 31st March 2003. The totals far exceed the number of applicants on the Registers, as applicants can choose between one and eight areas, in which to live.

Allocation Area	Number of Applicants
Area 1 – Eastwood	1398
Area 2 – Leigh	1712
Area 3 – Southend / Prittlewell	1975
Area 4 – Westcliff	1836
Area 5 – Central Southend	1621
Area 6 – Southchurch	1534
Area 7 – West Shoebury	647
Area 8 – East Shoebury	774

The demand is greatest for accommodation in the west (excluding the far west) and central areas of the Borough, and lowest for all property types in the east of the Borough, although the numbers on the waiting lists have still increased significantly in West and East Shoebury over the last year. This corresponds with the owner-occupier market, with the highest house prices also occurring in similar areas.

In addition to the above, the Council expects increased demand for accommodation to result from the development of the new Essex University campus in the town over the next 4-5 years.

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND SOCIAL CARE

The Council's establishment of a Department of Social Care has brought about a greater understanding of the housing related needs of the local community. A "joined up" perspective allows more attention to be paid to the support arrangements appropriate for people to enable them to lead better lives where they wish and in the locality of their choice. The failure to meet these needs can result in expensive placements having to be found within or outside of the borough.

Physical Disabilities

There is an increasing requirement for accommodation to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities. For too long, the Council has had no other option than to place people (eg after hospital treatment) in expensive accommodation often far away from the Borough and their families. The major priorities include:

- Supported housing for young people (under 30 years)
- People given "leave to remain" (eg illegal immigrants having a serious medical condition)
- Long term residential care for adults
- Adapted accommodation (eg wheelchair adapted housing, specialist lighting, etc).

Learning Disabilities

The Council has prepared a Learning Disability Accommodation Strategy 2003-08 ("Opening Doors") with an emphasis on working together to enable people with learning disabilities and their families to have greater choice and control over where, and how, they live. The aim is supported living at the expense of further reliance on residential care. Initial indications are that 40 people are now ready to prepare for moving into supported living from residential or family care though it is clear that an increasing number of young people will choose supported accommodation rather than the traditional residential care model. Similarly, people with older carers will need to plan their next move. Further evidence of need will be apparent from the Person-Centred Planning and Review's approach of the "Opening Doors" strategy.

Mental Health

The growing inter-dependence of community services highlights the relevance of good housing and adequate support to the improvement of mental health. The Council is keen to explore further opportunities in partnership with the local voluntary agencies, which have a vital role. The major priorities include:

- "Move on" accommodation
- Crisis accommodation (eg to offer a "retreat" for people who are undergoing a crisis or cannot return home)
- Along-term scheme for chronically, mentally-ill people requiring 24 hour support
- Detox schemes providing a staged programme of treatment, managed by nursing staff
- Housing for dementia sufferers

Children and Young People

The Council faces a complex series of housing needs presented by many young people. Housing and support solutions often need to take account of the mobility, occasional homelessness and drug/alcohol abuse that are features of many young lives. For example, 146 clients in the 16/17-year old age group visited the HARP day service during the 12 months ending March 2003 with 74 under-19s being accommodated on a short-term basis by the Night Service in the same period. The major priorities include:

- Emergency and assessment accommodation for vulnerable, young homeless people
- Teenage pregnancy hostel
- Housing for young substance misusers
- Young people given "leave to remain"
- Housing for vulnerable young people (eg homeless 16/17 year olds and young people upto the age of 21 leaving care)
- "Move on" accommodation for young people currently placed in supported schemes

The Council is a member of the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board which meets regularly to review progress and develop new work. In partnership with Ashley Homes, supported housing for pregnant teenagers and mothers has been developed. The scheme prepares mothers for move-on accommodation by concentrating on the following areas:

- Parenting skills
- Tenancy sustainment (including budgeting and cooking skills)
- Access to further education or training or assistance in maintaining school attendance

Older People

There has been considerable progress on services that enable most older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The Supporting People programme, with its remit to help with a range of preventative services for people while at home, allows greater consideration to be given to dealing with some of the housing related problems that affect people's ability and desire to remain at home.

Two priority areas have been identified:

- Support for certain daily activities for people felt to be socially isolated or having a need outside of their current home care package
- Establishment of a local Home Improvement Agency to provide advice and practical help on aspects of improvements and adaptations

Black and Minority Ethnic Community

The Essex Equality and Diversity Project, "Facing the Facts (2003), sponsored by the Essex Housing Officers' Group and the Housing Corporation identified the following housing priorities for the borough:

- Across Essex as a whole, 21% of the BME residents stated that they were aware of the services provided by local authorities and housing associations. The figure among the Southend-on-Sea sample was just 10%.
- Across the county, 10% of the BME residents stated that they found access to housing problematic. This compares with a much higher figure among the Southend-on-Sea residents of 31%. The main barriers to accessing housing were believed to be a lack of knowledge about how to register for housing (31%), a lack of appreciation of the services provided by the housing association sector (31%), an inability to get advice on other types of housing within the area (18%) and a general lack of awareness of the process involved if an individual or household found themselves homeless (12%).

Supporting People

The Supporting People programme aids local authorities to improve and reorganise ways of helping vulnerable people to live in the community. This means people with support needs can receive housing related services to enable them to live within their own home without having to move into specialist accommodation.

The Council's Supporting People Team has undertaken an in-depth needs' analysis, which has been informed by ongoing consultation with stakeholders. The analysis has expanded the existing knowledge of current provision within the Borough and has enabled the Council to identify new service areas.

For example, a need for an outreach worker to provide floating support for the Council's tenants was identified and is now in place. The role of the post is to improve and organise ways of helping vulnerable people to live in the community and ensure the provision of information and advice on tenancy sustainment, meaningful occupation, arrears management, etc. Several client specific floating support schemes have been developed and over 103 Council tenants are now receiving support in order to assist them maintain their tenancy. These clients were identified by the Council's Housing and Social Care officers, support providers and the Probation Service.

CONDITION OF THE HOUSING STOCK

Local Authority Housing

Generally, the Council's housing stock is in good condition compared with that of the private sector. 70% of the local authority's housing stock met the Decent Homes Standard at 1st April 2003 and the Council is on course to meet the Decent Homes targets of 2004, 2006 and 2010. The Council inspects 20% of its housing stock each year and is working towards the "just in time" replacement of key components based on condition for optimum efficiency.

Type and Size of Stock at 1st April 2003 (HIP format)					
Stock Category	Pre-1945	1945-1964	1965-1974	Post 1975	All Ages
Traditional Houses & Bungalows					
1. 1-2 Bedrooms	104	299	44	47	494
2. 3+ Bedrooms	407	670	42	36	1,155
Non-Traditional Houses & Bungalows					
3. Houses & Bungalows	1	274	313	13	601
Flats					
4. Low Rise (1-2 Storeys)	69	388	1,123	0	1,580
5. Medium Rise (3-5 Storeys)	0	398	813	0	1,211
6. High Rise (6+ Storeys)	0	298	1,006	0	1,304
Total Dwellings	581	2,327	3,341	96	6,345

NB: The Council also manages approximately 30 properties on behalf of the Council's General Fund. Resources for these properties come from the General Fund not the HRA so the condition of these properties will not be analysed in this document.

Baseline Data

The Council commissioned a firm of independent, expert consultants to undertake a full stock condition survey of its own housing stock in order to inform the HRA Business Plan. The fieldwork was undertaken by Countrywide Surveyors in 2000 with a representative sample of 15% of the stock being surveyed internally and externally. The remaining 85% of the stock was "cloned" to ensure a complete analysis of the stock.

The survey set out the condition of the stock by the following categories:

- **Catch up Repairs** – Work required to put the housing stock into a lettable condition immediately
- **Future Major Works** – Periodic refurbishment / replacement of building components to keep the property in a lettable condition
- **Cost Reflective Improvements** – Improvements to tenants' amenities which may justify higher rents
- **Non Cost Reflective Improvements** – Such items as upgrading thermal insulation, installation of main's smoke detectors and first time central heating
- **Exceptional Extensive Works** – Significant defects which fall outside normal routine repairs and maintenance
- **Cyclical / Responsive Repair and Void Maintenance** – Recurring annual maintenance and repair and maintenance arising from the landlord's obligation to carry out repairs to a property
- **Contingent Major Repairs** – Foreseeable structural defects or other major contingency repairs (eg wall tie failure, asbestos removal, etc)

The results of the 2000 stock condition survey were enhanced through the Council's own database. The database records the life expectancies of the key components of all the Council's housing stock in terms of the "expiry date" of the component. This provides crucial information for helping the Council achieve the Decent Homes standard by setting out a "worst case" scenario which will be amended as ongoing stock surveys report "actual" rather than "hypothetical" life expiry dates.

The survey also included the renewal costs of each of the key components thus enabling the total component replacement costs to be determined on a year-by-year basis up to 2033. In addition, the yearly costs will be refined as information from the annual surveys of the stock is accrued. These surveys will also highlight those components that might require replacement ahead of the theoretical life expiry date.

Key Findings

A total investment of £165.1m is required over the next 30 years - an average of £5.5m per annum - to meet the projected expenditure on responsive maintenance, cyclical maintenance and capitalised repairs and improvements. This will be funded from the Major Repairs Allowance, which amounted to £4.082m in 2002/03 and £4.051m in 2003/04.

The following conclusions arise from the Council's database records on stock condition:

- The stock has benefited from the Council's past maintenance activity and is in good order compared to other local authority owned stock
- 70% of the housing stock is currently considered to be meet the Decent Homes standard
- 8 dwellings currently fail the statutory fitness standard (if strictly applied) though only 3 of these are within the Housing Revenue Account (ie 0.05% of the HRA stock)
- A further 29% of the stock, whilst fit, is considered to fail the Decent Homes standard in terms of condition, amenity or fuel poverty
- A total investment of £165.1m is required over the next 30 years (as above)
- It is estimated that a further £24.9m will be required over the next 7 years to bring the stock up to the Decent Homes standard

Decent Homes Standard

The current position in relation to the Council's meeting of the Decent Homes standard is as follows:

Apart from a few miscellaneous properties, which are waiting decisions regarding their future because of serious dilapidation, the entire stock meets the current fitness standard.

Reasonable State of Repair:

A detailed appraisal has been undertaken to establish the life expectancy of the key components for every property within the stock. A database has been created for every key component (eg heating, electrics, windows, etc) which sets out the construction date of the property, any previous renewal/modernisation of the component and the expected renewal date /life expectancy of the component. This information has enabled the Council to produce a 2-year and 8-year programme of works that informs the Council's HRA Business Plan.

Modern Facilities and Services:

The life expectancy criteria used for determining the suitability of 'modern' facilities are more onerous than those for the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA). However, it is important that the actual condition of these components is considered since their condition may not coincide with their anticipated life expectancy. It is acceptable under the standard that up to two components may fail to reach the standard without preventing the property from being a Decent Home. The redrafting of the 30-year maintenance plan has taken these aspects into account. An ongoing rolling stock inspection programme will continue to inform the Council of the current stock position thus ensuring the HRA Business Plan remains up to date and allowing the Council to continually assess the financial position of its housing stock.

Thermal Comfort:

The latest calculated SAP rating of the Council's housing stock is 64.5, which means that the vast majority of the Council's properties have a reasonable amount of energy efficiency. A continuing energy efficiency and heating renewal programme will ensure that the Council's housing stock energy efficiency rating will continue to increase.

The stock condition survey originally identified 2,176 of the Council's properties as failing the Decent Homes standard at 1st April 2001. The most common reason for "non-decency" was "building elements considered to be in a state of disrepair". This was the result of these properties having had electrical central heating installed, poor energy facilities and tenants refusing to allow the works to go ahead.

At 1st April 2002, there were 2,175 non-decent properties. During 2002/03, 554 non-decent properties were tackled and a further 765 properties were receiving work to prevent them becoming non-decent. However, 319 properties became non-decent during 2002/03 leaving a total of 1,940 non-decent properties at 1st April 2003. Further information on the numbers of non-decent homes is contained within the Business Plan Statistical Appendix.

The following reasons were the cause of the 1,940 properties failing to meet the standard:

- 8 dwellings would fail the fitness standard, if strictly applied
- 1,828 dwellings are considered to be in a state of disrepair
- 367 dwellings have poor facilities
- 188 dwellings have poor energy efficiency ratings

NB: Some dwellings fall into more than one of the above categories and hence the total exceeds the number of properties

Energy Efficiency

The Council has continued to raise the average NHER rating of its own stock by specific insulation works (including energy efficiency measures as part of refurbishment), an ongoing programme of gas fired central heating and hot water installations and the replacement of obsolete partial warm air systems with radiator systems. Following a NHER Level `0` survey of the whole stock in 1995, it was revealed that the average NHER was 5.3, SAP 48.6 and CO2 emissions of 6.86 tonnes pa.

Policy targets were set to achieve an average NHER of 7.0 by 2000 and 7.5 by 2005.

Passive improvements to energy efficiency were the preferred route for reducing costs to tenants as, once installed, they would remain operative for the life of the building as well as not being dependent upon the occupier.

The latest calculated average ratings are NHER 7.3, SAP 64.5 and CO2 emissions of 4.9 tonnes pa.

Not only has this provided significant savings in energy costs for tenants, as well as better living conditions, but shows a 28% reduction in green-house gases.

The Council will continue to provide additional insulation to its properties, where possible, as well as replacing obsolete gas central heating systems. Resources will also be concentrated on bringing up to a higher standard the approximately 2.9% of the stock with an NHER of 4 or less, although the majority of these properties either have electric heating or the tenants have refused the work.

Non Residential Stock

The HRA Business Plan includes an allowance for income from the HRA's non-residential properties. The Council has a portfolio of commercial properties such as estate-based shops, office buildings and garages that produce an income for the HRA though require maintenance of the buildings. The Council will be reviewing the management of its non-residential properties in the following financial year, as it is recognised that these are important assets which form part of the HRA stock and provide local services and amenities close to residents' homes. The works to this stock have been included in the Capital Programme but only form a small proportion of the total expenditure.

Private Sector Housing

There are markedly different characteristics in the private sector that pose significantly different challenges in relating housing strategic objectives to meeting local needs. These include:

Property Condition

The worst housing conditions in Southend are to be found in the private sector. The last local house condition survey of private dwellings in 1997 found 9,600 dwellings unfit for human habitation¹. About two thirds of all the other (fit) properties needed repairs, with an average repair cost of £745.

The overall costs of bringing the private sector stock into a fit condition was estimated to be £38m, with another £42m needed to tackle the backlog of repairs and maintenance. It is notable that there were more unfit private sector properties than all the social housing sector stock put together.

Of the considerable number of unfit private properties found in 1997, most were located within the most deprived Wards of Milton, Victoria and St Lukes. These properties were often occupied by the most vulnerable groups of residents - the elderly, single parent families, and single persons. These types of household do not have access to appropriate funding to enable essential repairs and improvements to be carried out, as they are often on low incomes and in receipt of some type of benefit.

The Council will be undertaking a further local house condition survey of the private rented sector within the next 6 months to include an assessment of:

- Unfitness and disrepair
- Energy efficiency audit
- Fuel Poverty
- Non-decent dwellings
- Social survey on access/take up of potential 'housing assistance' options

Fuel Poverty

Many of these properties are poorly insulated and have inadequate means of heating. Taking account of limited incomes, a number of these households will be "fuel poor". Inadequate insulation and heating, physical disrepair causing, for example, dampness, and the lack of adequate amenities, such as internal WCs, bathrooms and kitchens, all contribute to producing poor housing conditions. Such conditions are known to have an adverse effect on physical health (eg bronchitis, asthma and other chest infections), but also negatively influence mental well-being, by affecting comfort and security.

To meet the wider longer-term objectives of the Council's Energy Conservation Strategy, it will be necessary to encourage the provision of basic insulation measures to all private sector dwellings, (where missing) over the next 5 years. This includes double glazing and more efficient heating if the overall aim of a 30% saving in energy consumption is to be achieved.

¹ That is dwellings not reasonably suitable for occupation by reference to the statutory minimum housing fitness standard found within the Housing Act 1985.

Shared Amenities and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

In some private sector properties, amenities have to be shared, which adds to "housing stress". This is particularly so in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) of which there are 154 in the Borough (119 bedsits and 35 guesthouses) occupied by about 1600 households mostly comprising single people, but also in shared houses and flats, and student accommodation. There are an estimated 26,000 flats in the Borough².

Overcrowding of accommodation is a problem in some properties, either in relation to amenities or to space (number of bedrooms).

A combination of such factors can critically compound "housing stress", and because low incomes often coincide with poor housing, residents can often feel "trapped" and socially excluded not simply from better accommodation but from wider social community relationships, opportunities and so forth.

Empty Homes

A very small proportion of the private sector stock is in so bad a condition as to be derelict and abandoned from occupation. But other private properties are also to be found unoccupied for a variety of reasons. Empty homes form a small proportion of the overall private sector stock (2%), but are nevertheless important in relation to the critical supply of accommodation in a Borough which is fully developed geographically and therefore short of accommodation in relation to ongoing demand.

Disabled Adaptations

For disabled occupiers or those with chronic ill health, a proportion of the private stock needs adaptation works each year to meet these special needs. There is a significantly high proportion of elderly and disabled residents in the Borough (23%), and therefore the demand for adaptations to dwellings remains relatively high.

Around 100 recommendations for adaptation works are made every year following the professional assessment of presented needs by Occupational Therapists. The demand for such adaptations has risen significantly since 1990, and last year, 67 disabled facilities grants were offered to meet the mandatory special needs of the local community in the private sector.

Nuisance in the Private Sector

The density of dwellings, together with the mix of non-residential nuisances, and predominance of flat conversions, gives much potential for nuisance, particularly from noise. There has been a steady increase in nuisance complaints and general anti-social behaviour to the detriment of amenity. Crime or the fear of crime is a significant factor in certain central wards in the Borough so home security is an issue in these areas.

Each year around 350 complaints are received from private sector tenants regarding disrepair. In addition, around 100 complaints are received from the occupants of HMOs about a range of matters, including disrepair, overcrowding, lack of fire precautions, poor management and lack of amenities.

Approximately another 100 complaints are received about premises-related nuisances, including empty properties; most of these complaints arise from deteriorating property condition as a result of neglect of repair and maintenance.

Direct neighbour nuisance arising from resident's behaviour accounted for more than 2,500 complaints to the Council in 2002/03.

² The figure for the number of flats in the Borough was 23,180 (1991 Census). There are approximately 300 flat conversions/constructions per year in the Borough so this has been rounded to form the 26,000 figure for 2001.

Enquiries from owner-occupiers for assistance with renewal grants numbered 269 in 2002/03 and referrals for disabled adaptations were 93 for the same period.

LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Southend's proximity to London, attractive coastal environment, good transport links and lower house prices than in the capital mean that the local and sub-regional housing markets continue to remain very buoyant. Many people moving into the area have high incomes that exert an upward pressure on house prices.

House prices in London increased by 5.9% in the 12 months ending June 2003 whilst the average price of a property in Southend has risen by a staggering 27.2% over the same period. The prediction of a slow down in the rise of property prices has not materialised in the London Region although future concerns may force the current interest rate to increase to depress the buoyancy of the housing market. The Council recognises that the local housing market does not stop at the boundaries of the Borough, but is part of the wider sub-region of the area.

For example, a recent analysis of the housing market demand in South Essex conducted by ATIS REAL Weatheralls for the Housing Corporation and the five local authorities comprising the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (draft report 2003) documented the following future projections of housing need:

Affordable Housing Needs in South Essex				
Planning Authority	2003	2004	2005	2006
Basildon	881	881	881	881
Castle Point	444	444	444	444
Rochford	338	338	N/A	N/A
Southend	1,487	1,487	1,487	1,487
Thurrock	578	578	N/A	N/A
South Essex	3,728	3,728	>2,812	2,812

Source: Latest Housing Needs Survey or Housing Strategy from the above authorities

The table below compares the average residential property prices between Southend, Essex and England and Wales³.

Type of Property	Average for Southend Borough	% Change from 2002	Average for Essex	% Change from 2002	National Average	% Change from 2002
Detached	£270,683	+32.5%	£266,473	+25.0%	£230,916	+22.9%
Semi-detached	£160,040	+29.8%	£166,998	+31.7%	£131,142	+23.5%
Terraced	£124,464	+31.1%	£135,895	+30.4%	£108,563	+19.0%
Flat/Maisonette	£87,787	+36.1%	£110,327	+38.3%	£142,023	+14.19%

Source: Land Registry - Average price of residential property sales completed January to March 2002 and 2003

³ The Land Registry – Comparison of average price of residential property sales completed between January to March 2002 (as at 30.4.01) and January to March 2003.

The house prices in many parts of Southend are higher than the affordability of most people who live and work in Southend. The average yearly gross income for each full-time employed person within the Borough is estimated at £20,793 (£349.00 per week net). Whilst this may seem fairly high in comparison with the national average, the figure is skewed by the number of people living in the Borough who enjoy the high salaries of the capital. The wage levels of many Southend employees are likely to fall below the "average wage" level. When compared to Rochford and Castle Point, Southend has a larger share of households living with incomes much lower than the national average household income (ie 47.8% of Southend households have an income of £15,000 or less compared to 36.6% and 39.1% in Rochford and Castle Point respectively). Hence, owner-occupation is only available to a proportion of the Borough's residents and only in certain parts of the Borough, thus excluding many households from homeownership.

Property prices in Southend and surrounding areas (1st quarter 2003)										
	Southend		Thurrock		Basildon		Rochford		Castle Point	
Detached	£257,163	100%	£259,832	101%	£279,517	109%	£270,474	105%	£192,518	74%
Semi-Detached	£170,057	100%	£163,266	96%	£162,416	95%	£166,749	98%	£160,729	94%
Terraced	£133,592	100%	£135,571	101%	£120,532	90%	£149,130	112%	£132,846	99%
Flat/ Maisonette	£97,690	100%	£109,235	112%	£94,658	97%	£101,029	103%	£95,687	98%
Total	£144,755	100%	£147,507	102%	£159,652	110%	£186,234	128%	£165,907	114%

Source: HM Land Registry, Property Price Data 2003

High house prices also have an impact on the private rented and social housing sectors within the Borough. Southend has a large private rented sector, but it is expensive. This makes home ownership even more attractive, particularly as it is often more cost effective to own a property than to rent one in either the RSLs sector or the private rented sector. These various factors exert pressure on house prices to continually rise.

The upward trend in house prices has had adverse effects for residents on low incomes. For many, the private rented sector is their only immediate source of accommodation. However, consultation with local landlords (through the Landlords' and Property Agents' Forum) found that the percentage of private rented lets to residents with Housing Benefit claims and/or low incomes had dropped from approximately 50% to 10% over the last five years⁴. High house prices were cited as a particular restriction on the supply of private rented housing for residents on low incomes.

Consequently, there is a great demand for other sources of housing such as the Council's own stock. This can be shown by:

- A significant increase in demand for social housing, in the last four years, within the Borough despite there being no major changes in the eligibility criteria for acceptance onto the Council's Combined Housing Register.
- The Housing Needs Survey 2002 identifies a number of unmet housing needs in the social housing sector of Southend. The sizes of dwellings required to meet the identified housing/accommodation needs are:

16% 1 bedroom
50% 2 bedrooms
34% 3 or more bedrooms

⁴ By May 2000, the number of households in receipt of Housing Benefit in the Private Rented sector had fallen by 30% in the 4 years since the new limits on eligible rents were introduced in 1996. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, April 2001). Southend's rate of decline is above the 'national' average resulting in a further demand for alternative sources and low cost housing.

Trends for the Future

The local housing market is likely to remain buoyant for the foreseeable future and the rise in property prices is likely to continue in the coming months. As wage rises have not kept pace with the increase in property prices the issues regarding the affordability of homes will still remain in the long term. The issue of affordability is further compounded by the future household projections⁵:

Projections: Household Type	2001	2006	2011
Married Couple Household	33,266	32,444	31,938
Cohabiting Couple Household	8,076	9,599	10,793
Lone Parent Household	4,744	4,837	4,820
Other Multi Person Household	6,480	7,191	8,112
One Person Household	25,004	26,275	27,996
Total	77,570	80,346	83,659

The projections show that the most significant growth is for one-person households, so assumptions can be made that there will be an increasing need for smaller-sized accommodation. This is in line with the Housing Needs Study 2002 which indicates that the largest need for affordable housing is for two bedroom properties.

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Population profile

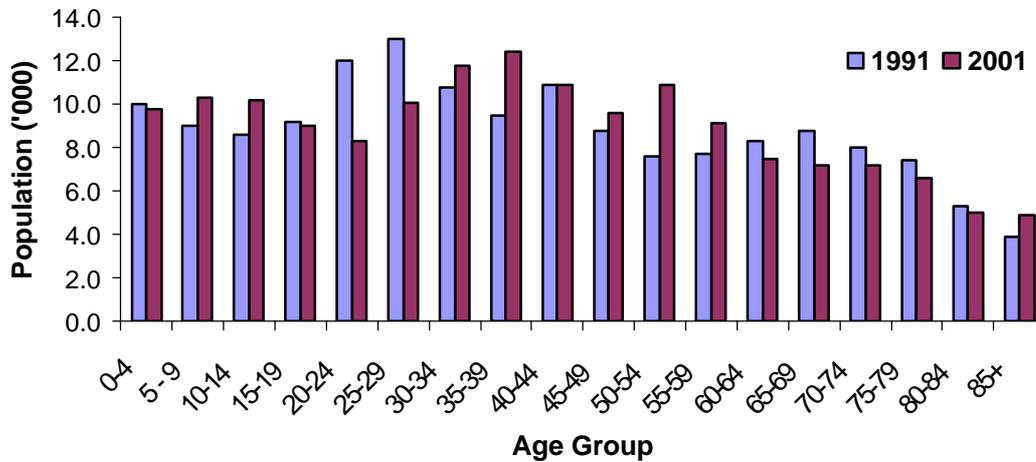
In 2001, Southend-on-Sea had a population of 160,400. The borough forms a major part of the largest urban conurbation in the East of England. At 38 persons per hectare, it is nearly 10 times the average population density of Essex, East of England region and England overall.

Overall, the population has not changed significantly since the date of the last Census. There have been key fluctuations in certain age groups. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of 20-29 olds has reduced from over 25,000 to just over 18,000. This amounted to a reduction of nearly 40% in this age group. In contrast, Southend has experienced an increase in those aged 30-59. In 1991, there were around 53,500 people in this age group though now the figure has risen to 64,700 - an increase of 21%. The continuous reduction in the 60-85+ age group between 1991 and 2001 amounted to a loss of over 3,300 resulting in an age profile which is becoming relatively younger. However, at 24%, the proportion of residents of pensionable age and over in Southend is still higher than that of Essex County Council (21.8%), East of England (21.4%) and England (20.8%).

The age group which saw the largest increase between 1991 and 2001 was the 50-54 group (an increase of 43% representing an additional 3,300 people) followed by the 35-39 group (31% growth with an 2,900 additional people) and the 10-14 group (19% increase with an extra 1,300 people by 2001).

⁵ 1996 Based Unpublished Household Projections. Source: Anglia Polytechnic University / CPHM run based on DETR projections.

Population Change 1991-2001



Source: ONS Census Data for 1991 & 2001

Future population growth

The pre-Census government population projections indicated that, if historical trends continued, Southend's population would grow by another 2.4% between 2001 and 2006. The projections also indicated a continuation in the reduction of older (65 and above) age groups. The highest growth, both in terms of numbers and the percentage growth, was projected for the 45-64 year olds with an increase of 6,700 people in the age group amounting to an 18% growth between 1996 and 2006. These projections are heavily dependent upon assumptions based on estimates relating to past experiences which were made before the 2001 Census. New projections at local authority levels are not expected to be released by the ONS until 2004.

Household characteristics

In 2001, the mid-year estimate provided 74,310 households in the Borough giving an average household size of 2.3 persons. The total number of households in 1991 comprised 3.4% lone parent households, 31.1% single person households and 30.3% pensioner only households (these categories are not mutually exclusive).

Ethnic Profile

The 2001 Census estimated that 6,774 people belong to ethnic communities other than white. This is a significant increase on the estimate of 4,000 in the 1991 Census. The Indian community continues to be the largest ethnic minority group, with 1,223 people (a two-fold increase since the 1991 Census). There is a diverse ethnic community, with the Indian (0.76% of resident population), Chinese (0.5%), African (0.64%) and Pakistani (0.43%) groups being the largest minority groups.

Unemployment Rates

Unemployment rates within the Borough have fallen though are still higher than the UK average:

Unemployment Claimants and the workforce based unemployment rate						
Area	June 2003		May 2003		June 2001	
	Claimants	Rate (%)	Claimants	Rate (%)	Claimants	Rate (%)
Southend UA	2,716	2.9	2,777	3.0	2,904	3.1
Rochford District	596	1.3	655	1.4	622	1.3
Castle Point District	685	1.3	700	1.3	747	1.4
Basildon District	2,056	2.0	2,045	2.0	2,173	2.1
Thurrock UA	1,916	2.1	1,920	2.1	1,936	2.2
Essex County Council	12,408	1.6	12,703	1.6	12,142	1.5
UK	939,159	2.6	957,787	2.6	937,033	2.6

The Southend economy is yet to complete its recovery from the recession in early 1990's. The Borough's unemployment rate at 2.9% (June 2003) is significantly above that of Essex (1.6%) and the UK (2.6%). The number of claimants is falling at a slow but a steadier manner than that experienced by Basildon and Thurrock.

Indices of Deprivation

Southend is ranked amongst the most deprived 24% of districts in England by the income and employment measures of deprivation. Nearly 39,000 of Southend's residents are deprived or on an inadequate income (receiving means-tested benefits) while almost 10,500 residents are excluded from the employment market through unemployment, ill-health or disability.

According to the 2000 Index of Deprivation, the Victoria Ward is the most deprived ward in Southend followed by Milton and St Lukes. Their levels of deprivation are not as high as those measured by the 1998 Index though it can be argued that the 2000 Index provides a more widespread pattern of deprivation than was recognised in the 1998 Index.

The Town Centre Wards of Victoria, Milton and St Lukes rank within the worst 25% Wards, and four further Wards are within the most deprived one-third of English Wards.

Ward Name	IMD2000		Rank		ILD1998	
	Index of Multiple Deprivation Score	Rank of Index of Multiple Deprivation	Rank		Rank	
			East	England	East	England
Victoria	34.57	1533	80	1533	28	956
Milton	34.43	1544	81	1544	8	555
St. Lukes	29.96	1992	127	1992	61	1372
Shoebury	26.41	2430	179	2430	155	2221
Southchurch	26.01	2507	186	2507	283	3254
Westborough	24.69	2703	213	2703	193	2554
Blenheim	24.22	2797	220	2797	219	2782
Thorpe	22.89	3028	246	3028	576	5005
Prittlewell	22.10	3156	261	3156	613	5281
Chalkwell	20.79	3407	303	3407	414	4065
Belfairs	13.03	5334	627	5334	933	6076
Eastwood	10.95	6036	782	6036	636	5465
Leigh	9.24	6673	880	6673	934	6076

Further Enquiries

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Copies of this Housing Needs Report can be provided in large print, audio tape or translated into a language other than English