

# **Housing Asset Management Plan**

February 2025



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#### Statement of Intent

Tendring District Council aims to manage its housing stock as far as reasonably practical in a way that ensures that all tenants and leaseholders experience safe, efficient, robust housing that is maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and other legislative and regulatory requirements.

The Council is resolute in its commitment to health and safety, ensuring that homes meet the required standards, and in embracing meaningful tenant engagement and the need to continually listen to residents' views as investment and service development is prioritised.

The Council is committed to the retention of its housing stock and to working in ways that make that sustainable. This plan shows how the Council will manage and invest in its housing stock and monitor progress.

#### Introduction

This Housing Asset Management Plan has been developed to provide a framework to enable the safe, efficient, and effective management of the Council's owned homes and related buildings and facilities.

The Housing Asset Management Plan supports one of the six themes contained in the Council's Corporate Plan and Vision 2024-2028: Pride in our Area and Services to Residents, with a continuing commitment to providing decent Council housing that everyone deserves.

The funding of housing activity is managed through the Council's Housing Revenue Account and 30-year business plan. The original 30-year plan was established as part of the self-financing reforms and associated borrowing in February 2012. The plan has been updated regularly with varying levels of amendment in order to react to changing circumstances and to remain current.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Business Plan plays a role in the delivery of affordable and decent housing in the district and the Council's responsibilities as a landlord have direct implications for the Council's ability to deliver on its ongoing objectives and priorities. The HRA Budget and Business Plan is maintained on an on-going basis that continues to demonstrate its sustainability and resilience within a self-financing environment and the ability to provide opportunities for investment in housing and associated services in the future.

This Housing Asset Management Plan has been developed at a time of regulatory change in the housing sector meaning there are significant changes in the management of Local Authority housing assets.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 provides a new era of regulation bringing far reaching changes surrounding the provision of social housing following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak.

This has resulted in an increased focus on health and safety and improvement to the delivery of building safety works. There is also an increased focus on energy efficiency and decarbonisation.

This plan is designed to remain flexible to allow it to meet the requirements of a complicated and changing environment and during an increasingly challenging financial period.

As the World, regulation and technology evolve, this plan will adapt to suit the Council's needs. A dynamic approach will be required to manage investment carefully and responsibly within the resources available.

The plan is supported by robust data, which will continue to be updated via our ongoing annual stock condition surveys and used to inform strategic planning. The data gained will be used to help the Council develop a proactive and assurance led approach to maintenance, which will keep tenants safe and respond to those areas that residents have told the Council are important to them. To assist with the efficient recording of the data collected, the Development and Building Team have access to various software. Lifespan (asset management) and Oneserve are housing specific data management platforms that hold all of the Council's compliance and stock data including the issuing of and monitoring of work flows. The use of Safety Culture (iAuditor), as an inspection tool, enables the creation of templates and the recording of the relevant information required when all types of site inspections are undertaken. This captured information also feeds into responsive and planned maintenance works including the management of disrepair complaints.

The Council will collaboratively work across its operational teams, using local knowledge and data collected to inform how, when and where investment is delivered, in order to maintain and improve the housing stock.

The Council will take a considered approach to the disposal of stock that is difficult or disproportionately costly to upgrade to appropriate standards or to maintain or occupy them in that way. A similarly balanced approach to stock acquisition will seek to ensure that new stock can be sustainably used and maintained to the standards that the Council, tenants and Regulator aspire to.

To support efficient and effective asset management, the Council will:

- increase its focus on contract management and contractor performance,
- embed the efficient delivery of planned and responsive works,
- swiftly and effectively resolve complaints.
- Making intelligent use of data, experience and draw upon best practice,

This plan will ensure the Council continually improves its overall asset management to drive best value outcomes.

# **Compliance and Safety in Council Homes**

Compliance and safety in its homes is a high priority for the Council. Compliance measures will be undertaken within appropriate timescales to ensure that the Council's housing meets the relevant health and safety standards and keeps tenants safe. The Council has invested and focussed in this area over recent years including new lifts, fire safety works completed and the creation of a Data and Compliance Officer role to monitor and report on safety and other issues.

The Council has developed key policies to document its methodology for managing key areas of compliance:

- Fire Safety
- Gas Safety
- Electrical Safety Management
- Water Hygiene Management
- Damp and Mould
- Asbestos Management

The Council proposes to develop a Lifts Policy (including stairlifts, platforms and other lifting devices) in the 2025-2026 financial year in order to document its ongoing work on the compliance of these matters.

Since October 2021, the Council has sporadically implemented a trial of the use of sensors which can monitor and report CO<sub>2</sub>, temperature and humidity levels in homes. The objective of these devices is to provide real time insight into conditions in properties in order to better understand the status of services and the performance and use of the properties.

This will allow a preventative and swifter reactive approach to be taken in relation to potential issues. Additionally, evidence collected can be used to inform interventions with contractors and tenants.

The devices also offer linkages to fire detection and potentially in the future to diagnostic and performance features of service installations. The Council proposes to roll out the use of these devices to enhance capability as technology advances.

# **Asbestos Management**

The Council has a duty to comply with the Asbestos Management Regulations 2012 and is committed to following best practice.

All communal areas have been surveyed between 2015 and 2024 and details of these surveys and asbestos documentation have been formulated into an Asbestos Register. Additionally all dwellings are surveyed when empty and the survey reports retained in the records system. All asbestos is managed in situ until it is appropriate for it to be removed. The council plans to remove all asbestos when dwellings are empty wherever it is practical and safe to do so.

Policy and procedure are fully documented in the Council's Asbestos Management Policy which is to be reviewed in the financial year 2025-2026.

# **Gas Servicing**

The Council has a legal obligation under the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998 to annually check the safety of all its gas appliances, pipework and associated fittings within its stock.

Policy and procedure are fully documented in the Council's Gas Safety Policy.

# **Electrical Safety Management**

The Council is committed to compliance with recommended frequency of electrical testing in rental properties. A programme of electrical inspections has been introduced and will be delivered through an annual programme of periodic testing.

Policy and procedure are fully documented in the Council's **Electrical Safety Policy**.

# **Fire Safety Management**

The Council is committed to meeting its obligations as a landlord and ensuring that fire safety is adequately managed: ensuring the safety of Council tenants, residents and those visiting Council owned residential properties. This extends to taking all reasonable steps to mitigate any foreseeable risks associated with fire in domestic properties.

Policy and procedure are fully documented in the Council's Fire Safety Policy.

# **Water Hygiene Management**

The Council has a corporate policy for the control of legionella that has been written in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice L8. The code recommends that routine testing of communal water systems is undertaken.

Risk assessments of individual sites are used to identify the testing and inspection regime including the frequency. In the Council's sheltered housing schemes there are monitored regimes of flushing and temperature monitoring including specific attention to empty homes, communal areas and guest rooms.

The corporate Legionella Policy is to be reviewed in the financial year 2025-2026

# **Lift Management**

Renewal of all vertical lifts within the current housing stock was completed in December 2023. There is a programme for the renewal of stair lifts where this has been identified.

An annual inspection of all lifts is undertaken, in line with the requirement of the Council's insurance company. A detailed policy on lifts and lifting equipment will be produced and adopted in the financial year 2025-2026.

#### **Decent Homes**

In accordance with the Government Decent Homes Standard the Council monitors key components such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows that may require replacement. The Decent Homes standard sets out a specific duration/lifetime for these components, and these are replaced on a programmed basis.

A full stock condition survey of all the Council's Housing Stock commenced in 2023, and will continue over a four year period, until all have been surveyed. The aim of the surveys is to establish a clear, evidenced data position and to inform and direct programmed activity.

Decency is a key area of focus for the Council over the next four years, and beyond, to ensure that all the Council's housing properties meet the required standards. The Decent Homes Standard is likely to change, having been subject to a recent Government consultation (2023). The Council will consider any subsequent regulatory changes and the costed implications of those changes following publication of the revised standards.

The housing stock condition survey also identifies hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Any hazards categorized as Category one hazards are passed to the council for immediate remedial action. Lower priority hazards are submitted to the Council together with the other stock condition data and prioritised accordingly.

# **Heating**

The Council's housing stock includes a range of heating systems types, and although the bulk of the systems are gas fired central heating systems with radiators, there are also a number of electric storage heating, electric radiant panels, oil fired central heating and air source heat pumped systems.

Typical lifespans for these systems are considered to be:

- Gas boiler 15 years
- Oil boilers 15 years
- Heating systems (pipework and radiators) 30 years
- Electric storage heaters 15 years
- Air source heat pumps 20 years (although some early installations have failed well within that period)

Stock condition data will be used to update renewal and upgrading programmes. In most cases a new heating system will result in an improvement in the energy efficiency of the home due to increased system efficiencies.

As part of the heating upgrade programmes, a review of the insulation levels in each property will be carried out, and, where appropriate, upgrades such as additional loft insulation or draft proofing measures will be undertaken. Where hot water storage tanks are required, high efficiency tanks that are the correct size for the home will be installed.

It is suspected that as part of the revised Decent Homes Standard there may be a directive that no new gas boilers will be allowed to be installed in existing properties after 2035. The Council is committed to phasing out gas boilers as soon as possible, but recognises that there needs to be a balance between provision of sufficient heating equipment capacity to tenants at affordable running and installation cost.

Short to medium term challenges of non-gas alternatives include cost, availability and deliverability at scale. The Council will carry out further tenant and internal consultation, alongside the stock condition survey and a technical project to understand the energy performance of its housing stock and options for improvement.

Current principles when selecting replacement heating systems are to review properties identified for renewal or upgrade taking into account location, available supplies and property type. Taking into account all factors the preference is for:

- A high efficiency gas boiler.
- An air source heat pump.
- A high efficiency oil boiler
- Modern electric storage heaters.

#### Windows and Doors

The Council's housing stock has a very high proportion of double-glazed uPVC framed and double-glazed windows and doors. UPVC frames are durable, but if locking mechanisms, draught seals and handles fail they are hard to replace. Where repairs are found to be impossible the only solution is to replace individual windows which consequently results in a mix of age and hardware in the property.

Where a mixture of ages or types of windows are encountered in one property, an assessment will be carried out to determine whether to replace individual windows or all windows in the property or block so as to ensure they are of the same material and age.

The life of UPVC windows and doors is considered to be 30 years. The Council plans to replace windows and doors on that timescale unless damage necessitates earlier renewal as above. Unless historic considerations dictate otherwise, windows will be replaced with double glazed uPVC framed units. Doors will be replaced with GRP composite or uPVC doors, fire and smoke resisting as location dictates.

#### **Kitchens**

Under normal circumstances, kitchens will be replaced when they are 30 years old. Where a kitchen is under 30 years old, but the condition is poor, an assessment of its remaining life will be made to facilitate decision on potential early replacement.

Stock condition data obtained shows that there are a number of properties with a kitchen that is over 30 years old. These kitchens will be prioritised to be replaced based on age and condition with a view to working toward mainly age based replacement.

The Council has consulted with its Tenants' Panel on the range of colour choices that could be offered as part of kitchen refurbishments. The current range of choices, based on that consultation, means that when a kitchen is refurbished, tenants will be provided with a choice of a small range of colours and on the layout of units and fixtures however this may diminish as some colours may be discontinued over time.

Each proposed kitchen renewal will be individually surveyed by a contractor, and a bespoke layout provided for each tenant. This will take account of any specific needs, colour and layout choices or other wishes they seek to incorporate into the design.

### **Bathrooms**

Under normal circumstances, bathrooms will be replaced when they are 40 years old. Where a bathroom is under 40 years old, but the condition is poor, an assessment will be undertaken on the need to restore or replace. Any bathrooms identified by stock condition surveys as being over 40 years old will be prioritised for

replacement, based on the age and condition with a view to working toward mainly age based replacement.

Bathrooms in houses and first and second floor flats will normally be refurbished with baths, whereas bathrooms in bungalows and ground floor flats will be assessed at the time and may be refurbished to include a level access shower. This approach will support the future allocation of properties to tenants with specific needs, aiming to create sustainable solutions that remain effective over the long term. It will also minimise the need to remove relatively new baths to install accessible shower rooms.

The Bathrooms will be white suites with white tiles and a colour border.

# **Fencing and Paving**

Where fencing is the Council's responsibility to maintain, it will generally be replaced when it fails, rather than as a planned programme of work. The normal standard will be a 1.8m privacy panel & 1.2m high chain-link fence on concrete posts. Full details are contained in the <u>Fencing and Paving Policy</u>.

# External and Communal Areas - Painting and Decoration

The Council has prioritised other works for a number of years and there is some evidence to support a return to a planned programme of painting and maintenance. This proposed programme will be informed by the stock condition survey.

Subject to other priorities, a proposed painting cycle of every seven to eight years is planned together with the intention to replace all timber fascia and soffits with uPVC, wash down any uPVC cladding and decorate any previously painted masonry, render or other surfaces.

# Garages

The Council currently (at December 2024) owns 389 garages, of which 379 are let<sup>1</sup>, with 10 not let due to being beyond economic repair. There continues to be a high demand for garages in certain areas with the demand outweighing availability.

Although garage units are in high demand they are not a core part of the housing service. To enable the Council to formulate a plan for the garage stock, a full condition survey will be undertaken within the first year of this policy being adopted. A garage plan will identify:

- those garages which can be repaired and let;
- those garages which could be made available for any possible future Council housing development, and;

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> April 2024

 those garages which are identified as being beyond economical repair requiring them to be demolished or replaced.

#### Roofs

Sound roof coverings are essential to maintain the fabric of homes. Roofs are replaced on the basis of their condition.

The lifespan of a roof differs for flat and pitched roofs. This ranges from 25 years for a flat felt roof to 70 years or more for a slated or tiled roof. The Decent Homes Standard defines a roof covering as old when it reaches 50 years for a pitched roof and 30 years for a flat roof. A roof that is over 50 years old but in good condition will not normally require immediate replacement.

The Council's stock condition survey will carry out an assessment of the roof conditions of homes to then establish their remaining lifespan. This assessment will inform forward planning programmes.

# **Electrical Improvements**

All Council owned dwellings will have a fixed wiring check every five years. Where an electrical test is undertaken and it is found that that the wiring is not satisfactory, immediate, short term or programmed repairs and upgrades will be carried out depending on the nature of the findings. Full re-wires will only be carried out if repair of the system will not result in a satisfactory test result.

Where electrical improvement and full re-wires are carried out, the focus is on ensuring that current standards are complied with. This includes making sure that there are sufficient sockets throughout the property. Full details are contained within the Council's <u>Electrical Safety Policy</u>.

# Damp and Mould

The Council is committed to reducing and addressing damp and mould in its homes as set out in the Council's <u>Damp and Mould Policy</u> adopted in November (2023).

Advice and guidance is provided to tenants:

As part of the information pack provided to new tenants;

To tenants that have reported damp and mould, and;

is regularly included within the Council's quarterly newsletter (Tendring Reports).

The intention is to help tenants understand how they can reduce the impact of condensation, but it is made clear that any ongoing problems should be reported so that they can be investigated.

Initially, the Council's response to reports of damp and mould is on a reactive basis. An appropriately detailed investigation will be undertaken after a tenant has reported an issue, or where a surveyor, has identified a hazard.

Repair data will be analysed to determine whether there is a particular issue in certain locations, or within a certain type of property. This will facilitate investment decision making to proactively deal with damp and mould and other issues.

The council will install humidity-controlled extractor fans during kitchen and bathroom refurbishments.

# **Aids and Adaptations**

The Council recognises its social responsibility to provide suitable homes for those with a disability, its responsibility to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and its duty to provide works to those eligible for a grant under the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996. It is the Council's aim to deliver a responsive service, in relation to adaptions or supply of aids which will meet the needs of residents and to provide good value for money. In support of this, the Council's Adaptations Policy is currently being reviewed (2025) and will set out how the Council will deliver this service in the future.

The type of work undertaken ranges from small items such as handrails, to more major adaptations and, in a few cases, an extension to the property. Resident's needs and eligibility are assessed by the Council's Housing Grants team following referrals from either Essex County Council Social Care, or via Approved Assessors.

The Council's Building and Development team ensures works are effectively prioritised and carried out in a timely fashion, ensuring tenants and other parties are satisfied.

The Council aims to ensure that vacant properties which have disabled adaptations, are re-let to new tenants who require these adaptations. Vacant properties with the potential to house families with complex needs are fully inspected and considered for additional alterations or any potential future needs of that family. These measures aim to minimise and prevent the need for successive moves due to changing circumstances. Where specialist accommodation is no longer needed, assistance and guidance to move to more suitable accommodation will be offered to ensure that the Council's housing stock is being effectively used.

# **Responsive Repairs Service**

The objective of the repairs service is to provide a customer focussed responsive repairs service, which achieves high levels of performance, customer satisfaction, and good value for money. The <a href="Housing Repairs Policy">Housing Repairs Policy</a> details the Council's approach and standards.

The repairs service is delivered through a term maintenance contractor, an in house workforce and a range of specialist contractors. Initial repair requests can be made

via the Council's call centre or by email. The Council will continuously review working arrangements and will introduce changes and new technology in order to continuously improve the response and consistency of the repairs service.

# **Empty Properties**

The objective of empty property works is to make those properties available for letting as quickly as possible, thereby minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available whilst striving to meet residents' expectations.

The Council's priorities are to:

- provide a safe and secure home;
- improve re-let timescales;
- provide a re-let standard that meets residents' expectations.

The Council will continue to aim to minimise the time a property is unoccupied by carrying out property inspections prior to vacation wherever possible. The Council will also identify those properties where minimal works are likely to be required, and ensure these are re-let in the shortest possible time.

The Council has adopted an <u>Empty Homes Management Policy</u> which further details services and standards.

# Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. It has developed a Climate Action Plan and as part of this it is committed to significantly reducing carbon in its housing stock by 2050.

Critical to meeting this target is to understand the current position and to develop a clear way forward to meet targets. The organisation holds Energy Performance Certificates for a proportion of its stock, built up through acquisition and letting processes. It has also included a standard assessment of its homes Energy Performance Certificate in the stock condition survey specification. This will mean that energy performance data for around 25% of homes will be available in 2025 and for all homes by 2027.

The Council intends to:

- Focus on improving energy efficiency in its existing homes within the context of other work and projects.
- Set a target to be as near as possible to carbon neutral for all new build homes that are acquired to be used as Council housing.
- Carry out further work to assess how best to adapt Council homes to be closer to carbon neutral.
- Consider and discuss with tenants, the implications and opportunities of decarbonisation options.

- Proactively provide advice on energy efficiency to tenants.
- Work to attract external funding to improve the energy efficiency of the stock.

Once the Council has identified suitable measures and properties through the ongoing stock condition survey, the Council aims to:

- Meet government and regulator targets for energy efficiency.
- Increase the Energy Performance Certificate ratings for the properties identified.
- Combat fuel poverty by assisting to reduce energy bills.
- Ensure homes are thermally comfortable and efficient.
- Develop and design further energy efficiency and heating schemes.
- Include social value in procurement, tailored to the Council's priorities.

#### **Energy Performance Baseline**

Based on those Energy Performance certificates available in April 2024, approximately 45% of Council homes meet or exceed the government's 2030 EPC band C target:

EP	C Ban	Percentage of Stock surveyed
Α	0	0%
В	91	6%
С	830	61%
D	384	28%
Е	44	3%
F	2	0.1%
G	0	

The vast majority of the Council's homes are already within band C or D, which suggests that those below that banding will require achievable improvement to meet the target of a band C. However, there are a number of properties that have a low rating, which cannot be improved without significant investment. Long term strategies and substantial funding for major projects, disposal or redevelopment will therefore need to be considered.

#### **Technical Approach**

The Council's approach will be to take a 'Fabric First' approach when investing in its properties in line with a general principle that it is better to reduce energy need than to meet it. This approach provides the most sustainable and cost-efficient improvements for tenants and aligns with Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund principles. Examples of this may be loft or wall insulation, replacement windows and doors, or more efficient lighting or heating.

Properties with quite low efficiency standards will need a carefully balanced approach and a package of measures. It may be that to be effective some of these packages need also to include local power generation. The Council will also consider and contribute to local power generation and networks where this can be clearly shown to support the fabric first approach in an affordable and sustainable way.

Investment planning will allow the Council to ensure that work is carried out in a sensible sequence to reduce disruption to tenants, manage costs and avoid duplicated or abortive works.

When developing all works and investment programmes, the Council will review proposals to understand both their carbon impact and future running costs to the Council and its tenants.

#### **External Funding**

To support the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, it has provided the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) which can be accessed over a 10-year period. This is to provide funding to encourage and enable social housing providers to accelerate their energy efficiency and decarbonisation plans. The fund aims to:

- Upgrade a significant amount of the social housing stock currently below EPC rating C up to that standard,
- Deliver warmer and more energy-efficient homes,
- Reduce carbon emissions,
- Reduce energy bills, and tackle fuel poverty and support the creation of 'green' jobs

The Council's housing stock is an aging one and careful consideration will have to be given on what energy saving measures are considered as it should have a positive outcome for the tenant. It is therefore the Council's intention to work towards being able to meet the criteria to access this fund.

# Addressing Fuel Poverty

Alongside the investment in our properties, the Council will support its tenants in addressing fuel poverty. The Council must ensure that tenants' energy bills do not increase through the installation of new or alternative technologies. This is a key aim of the energy performance review project. The Council will compare the energy efficiency and/or carbon reduction against any potential increase in energy usage and potential increased costs to tenants.

#### Measuring Success

Housing providers have been required to collect specified data in relation to their performance from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The Council will maintain the regulatory required performance indicators and will develop further performance indicators where required to measure the success of this plan. Council officers will also be assigned ownership of relevant indicators and will be expected to provide the current figures and any explanation that is required of current position.

#### Performance indicators are:

- Percentage of stock NOT meeting Decent Homes Standard
- Percentage of stock with a current valid gas safety check
- Average re-let time for Council housing (calendar days)
- Average time to complete disabled adaptations in Council properties following referral from social care - (working days)
- Average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating
- Percentage of stock with an in date Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)
- Percentage of blocks with current Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)
- Number of Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) actions outstanding
- Percentage of Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) actions outstanding that are out of target
- Number of properties (within the calendar month) where the gas safety check was not completed before the expiry date
- Percentage of water hygiene actions that are out of target
- Number of asbestos safety checks
- Average time to complete responsive repair (working days)
- Percentage of responsive repairs completed by appointment
- Satisfaction that the home is safe
- Non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale
- Percentage of tenants satisfied with quality of responsive repairs
- Percentage of tenants satisfied with quality of capital improvements
- Percentage of new tenants satisfied with their new home (condition of property)

The above measures will be collated on an ongoing basis and reported back to senior management as required. These will also facilitate reporting of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) which are part of the new regulatory regime for housing.

# Related Policies/Strategies, Procedures and Legislation

- Rechargeable Works Policy for Council Tenants and Leaseholders (2024)
- Housing Repairs Policy (2023)
- Damp and Mould Policy (2023)
- Fire Safety Policy (2023)
- Empty Homes Management Policy (including Standard) (2024)
- Gas Safety Policy 2024
- Electric Safety Management Policy 2024
- Asbestos Management Policy (reviewed in 2025)
- Acquisitions Policy (to be revised and to include Disposals 2024/25)
- Water Hygiene Management (to be reviewed in 2025)

#### Legislation

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Decent Homes Standard
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

#### **Review**

This Housing Asset Management Plan will be reviewed every three years in consultation with tenant representatives, Council staff, other stakeholders and the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, unless there are any reasons, such as legislative changes, requiring that it be reviewed earlier.