

POLICY SCRUTINY GROUP – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2017

Report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing

ITEM 6 HOUSING STRATEGY 2015-2020 UPDATE

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2015-2020 and enable the Group to scrutinise the continued actions to deliver the priorities identified in the Strategy.

Policy Context and Justification

The Housing Strategy 2015-2020 is designed to help deliver the Council's priorities identified in the Corporate Plan, including the objective of 'Creating a Strong and Lasting Economy', and meet its obligations in respect of the strategic housing needs of the Borough.

Background

The Housing Strategy 2015-2020 sets out how housing will contribute towards achieving the Council's strategic goals. The Strategy concentrates on three priorities:

- Priority 1: Increasing the Supply of Suitable Housing
- Priority 2: Reducing the Barriers to Housing
- Priority 3: Prioritising Services to Enable People to Stay in their Own Homes

The current Housing Strategy for Charnwood was adopted in April 2015. Since then, there have been some significant changes to the housing landscape; in particular, the introduction of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and, more recently, the publication of the Housing White Paper, 'Fixing our broken housing market'.

The Housing Strategy progress report (see the Annex to this report) provides an overview of the Council's current priorities, its achievements and the challenges that lie ahead for housing including setting out the actions planned up until April 2020.

Background Papers: [Cabinet, 9th April 2015 – item 9](#)
[Policy Scrutiny Group, 10th March 2015 – minute 49](#)
[Policy Scrutiny Group, 18th November 2014 – minute 33](#)

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*Creating
a Strong
and Lasting
Economy*

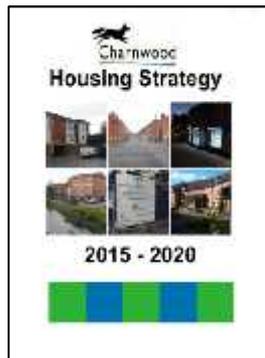


The **Housing Strategy** sets out how the Council intends to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our residents

It contributes towards the Council's **Corporate Plan 2016-2020** ambition to *"make the Borough a better place to live..."* and is central to the Council's strategic goals in *"creating a strong and lasting economy"* and *"every resident matters"*



The current Housing Strategy for Charnwood was adopted in April 2015 and sets out how housing will contribute towards achieving the Council's strategic goals.



Since the publication of the Housing Strategy, there have been a number of significant changes nationally to housing policy which are likely to impact on the Council's future housing offer to residents.

The Housing Strategy priorities are to:

1. Increase the supply of suitable housing
2. Reduce the barriers to housing
3. Prioritise our services to enable people to remain in their homes

These changes include the introduction of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as well as the publication of The Housing White Paper, 'Fixing our broken housing market' in February 2017.

This progress report sets out the progress we have made in delivering the Housing Strategy and provides an overview of our current priorities, our achievements and the challenges that lie ahead for housing including setting out the actions planned up to April 2020.



Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act received Royal Assent on the 27th April 2017. The Act places new legal duties on Local Authorities so that everyone who is homeless, or at risk of homelessness, will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status.

The Act will come into force in April 2018 following the publication of statutory guidance which is expected in early spring 2018.

Changes include:

- J Extension of the previous 28 day period for 'threatened homelessness' to 56 days, making clear that a valid Section 21 notice that expires in 56 days also constitutes being 'threatened with homelessness'.
- J A duty for the Council to provide free advice and information to prevent homelessness and securing accommodation for households.
- J A duty for the Council to assess every eligible applicant's case and agree and monitor a Personalised Housing Plan.



Housing White Paper – 'Fixing our broken housing market'

The paper's main objectives are to boost housing supply and to create a more efficient housing market that leads to outcomes that more closely align with the needs and aspirations of all households, whilst supporting wider economic prosperity.



Additionally, the paper proposes some significant changes which are likely to change the way Local Authorities meet housing need in the future. These changes include:

- J Encouraging Registered Providers and Local Authorities to build more homes
- J Widening the definition of affordable housing to include starter homes, intermediate rent, discounted housing and rent-to-buy
- J A greater focus for Local Authorities to do more to prevent homelessness
- J Making renting in the private sector more fair for households



Priority 1: Increasing the supply of suitable housing

Local Plan

Charnwood's Local Plan was adopted in November 2015 and sets out the development plan for the Borough to 2028. At the time, the evidence base was the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which suggested an annual shortfall of 810-820 new homes per year (a total of 13,940 homes for the period of 2011-2028).

The latest evidence on housing need is provided by the 2017 Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) which suggests a need for 994 homes per year for the period 2011-2036. This is a significant increase in predicted population growth from the previous Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014 which identified a need for 810-820 homes a year for the period 2011-2031.

Affordable Housing

The 2017 HEDNA suggests a need for **384** new affordable homes per year for the period 2011-2036. This is an increase of 204 homes per year (88% increase) when compared to the 2014 SHMA which identified a need of 180 new affordable homes up to the 2028. This is primarily due to a significant reduction in the existing supply of affordable homes which are available for re-let (reduction from 632 per year to 464) which may be due to the reluctance of some households to move due to concerns over job security and

reduced disposal income as a result of welfare reforms.

Table 1: Net Increase in Affordable Housing

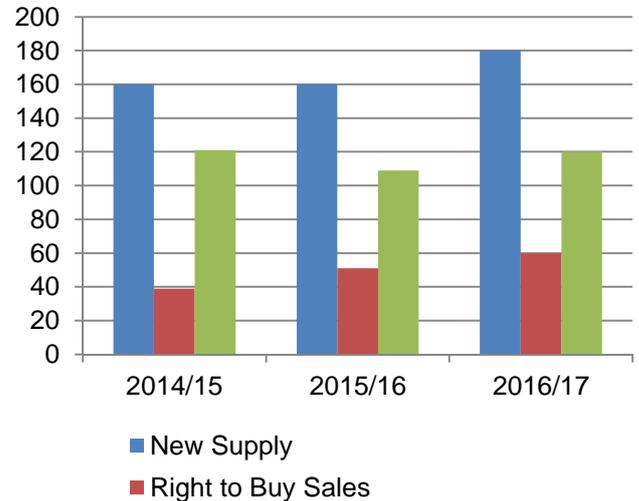


Table 1 above shows that whilst the gross supply of affordable housing has increased marginally from 160 in 2014-2015 to 180 in 2016-2017, the increase in right-to-buy sales has significantly impacted the net additional supply. Consequently, meeting the current identified shortfall of 384 new affordable homes per year is likely to be challenging.

The Council will need to be proactive to ensure affordable housing secured as part of Section 106 Agreements is delivered. Furthermore, we will need to look at other ways to increase the supply of new affordable housing and consider how to make best use of the private rented sector to meet housing need.



Key Achievements

To support the delivery of an increasing supply of suitable homes, the Council has:

- J Published a new Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which provides developers with clear guidance on our expectations for the delivery of new housing
The SPD should improve the quality of planning applications received by the Council as well as reduce time and costs for the developers in having to re-submit revised drawings.
- J Granted planning permission for 590 additional new homes during the period April 2015 to March 2017
- J Delivered 340 new affordable homes to meet the housing needs of those households not able to access market housing
- J Established a Registered Provider Developer Forum to support the delivery of new affordable housing in Charnwood
- J Secured an Extra Care Housing Scheme for the elderly as a condition of granting planning permission in each of the three sustainable urban housing extensions across the Borough



Challenges

Charnwood's Local Plan requires 20% to 40% of all new housing on sites of more than 10 homes to be affordable housing.

Sites are likely to stall if the developer is not able to secure a Registered Provider to transfer the affordable housing to, at a price which makes a scheme financially viable. With an ongoing reduction in Affordable Housing Grant and a reduction in Housing Revenue funding, there is likely to be less funding available to deliver new affordable housing.

ACTION

Priority 1: Increase the supply of housing

- J Explore the alternative delivery models to increase the numbers of affordable homes other than through planning gain
- J To adopt a flexible approach to securing affordable housing which both meets the housing needs for our residents and promotes new housing sites across the Borough to support housing growth
- J Develop and publish a Housing Acquisition Policy to secure affordable housing on Section 106 sites where there is no Registered Provider interest and acquire existing properties including ex-council properties sold through Right-to-Buy to meet housing need, as well as preventing homelessness to vulnerable households in mortgage arrears

Priority 2: Reducing the barriers to housing

Housing plays a key role in supporting an individual’s good health and wellbeing.

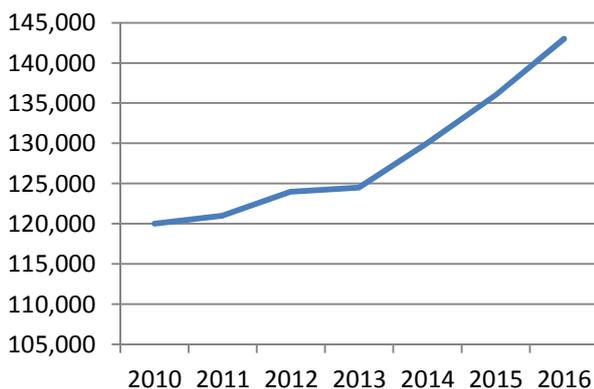
Barriers to accessing housing include:

-) Affordability
-) Suitable accommodation
-) Transport links including public transport
-) School places
-) Quality of social housing
-) Debt including rent arrears and rechargeable repairs

Home Ownership

Since 2010, lower quartile house prices across Charnwood have increased steadily from £120,000 to £146,000 in 2016. This represents a 22% increase.

Table 2: Lower Quartile House Prices for Charnwood (£)



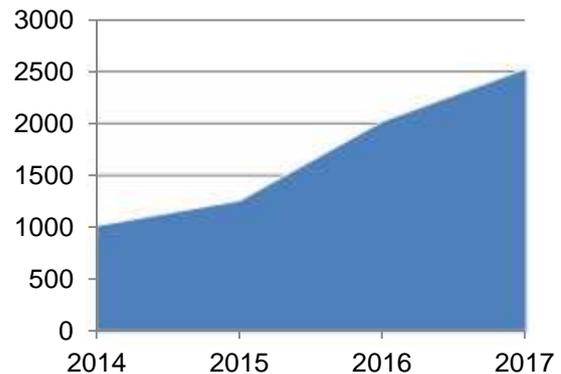
Affordability of housing is measured by the ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross annual income. On this basis, households require 7 times their income to afford to buy a lower

quartile property in the Borough. The factors which are driving demand include higher house prices, rising private rents and a lack of affordable homes.

Social Housing Register

There are currently approximately 2,500 households on the Council’s Housing Register waiting for social housing. The number of applicants on the Register has risen by 148% over the last 3 years.

Table 3: Number of Households on the Housing Register



Private Rental Market

Over the period April 2016 to March 2017, the average private rent for a 2 bedroom property in Charnwood was £548 per month. The average lower quartile rent is £486 per month which is marginally higher than the current Local Housing Allowance of £475.

As a university town, it is inevitable that the demand for student housing in the Loughborough area will impact on the availability of affordable private rented accommodation for the wider community, as landlords often prefer renting to the transitional student market.



Key Achievements

To reduce the barriers to housing, the Council has:

- J Secured funding to appoint a Social Lettings Co-ordinator to develop partnerships to support our customers to access suitable accommodation within the private rented sector
- J Developed a Prison Release Protocol to provide a clear pathway to housing and prevent homelessness
- J Developed and supported a Financial Inclusion Service with our Partners to provide households with money and debt advice and enable them to access financial services such as banking, affordable credit and insurance
- J Promoted Low Cost Home Ownership products to those households within the required income thresholds who may aspire to home ownership
- J Secured a range of affordable housing types to meet the need of residents including bungalows on sites in Shepshed, Queniborough and Loughborough



Challenges

With reduced funding for new affordable housing for rent, the challenge will be to meet the housing needs of those households not able to access home ownership or the private rented sector.

To promote sustainable communities across the Borough, we will need to ensure that there is a range of housing tenures and property types available to residents.

This will be particularly challenging in rural settlements where there are limited opportunities to build new homes.

ACTION
Priority 2: Reduce the barriers to housing
J Improve access to the Private Rented Sector
J Promote Mutual Exchange to make the best use of the existing stock
J Deliver the Rough Sleeper Transition Project to provide support and improve access to accommodation for this group
J Review housing need at Parish level in the rural areas to support the delivery of homes for local residents



Priority 3: Prioritising services to enable people to stay in their own homes

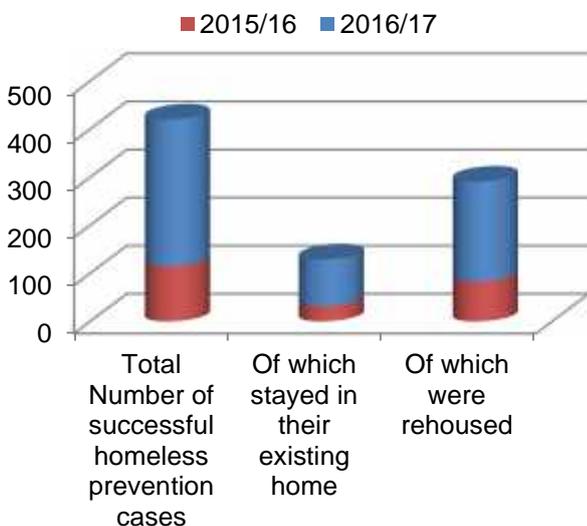
Several factors impact on a person’s ability to stay in their own home:

-)] The property is too small and results in overcrowding
-)] Cannot afford to live in the home
-)] Feeling unsafe in the home
-)] The property is unsuitable due to health and mobility needs
-)] Breakdown of a relationship

Preventing homelessness

The Council has a legal duty to provide advice, assistance and sometimes accommodation to households who are threatened with homelessness, or are homeless.

Table 4: Number of Cases where the Council has Prevented Homelessness



During the two year period from April 2015 to March 2017, the Council prevented 420 households becoming homeless, of which 129 were able to remain in their existing home.

This was mainly as a result of the Council supporting households with debt advice, resolving Housing Benefit problems, and resolving rent arrears in both the social and private sectors.



Assisting People to Live Independently in their Home

The Council provides a range of services and support to help people stay in their own home, including:

-)] Providing grants to address poor housing conditions
-)] Providing grants to adapt a home to facilitate a disabled person to stay in their home’



Key Achievements

To enable people to stay in their own home, the Council has:

- J Responded to requests from private landlords and implemented E-newsletters as the preferred method of communication to maintain landlord awareness of their responsibilities and advise of opportunities to support tenants
- J Charnwood Citizens Advice Bureau has secured positive outcomes for 322 households between 2015-2017, through providing debt and money advice
- J Through the Lightbulb Service Model we have worked in a partnership with Leicestershire County Council and Local Authorities across Leicestershire to transform how we deliver services to older and vulnerable people to stay safe and well in their own homes
- J We have provided disabled facilities grant funding to support 255 households in need of adaptations to stay in their own home across Charnwood



Challenges

A growing older person population is likely to have an impact on the future demand for services.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act will mean that services will need to be reviewed to ensure the Council meets its' statutory duties and ensure that appropriate support is in place to prevent households becoming homeless and to secure suitable accommodation.

ACTION

Priority 3: Prioritising services to enable people to stay in their own homes

- J Review services to meet the requirement of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2016
- J Work in partnership with the Leicestershire Councils to implement the Lightbulb Service Model across the Borough deliver an integrated model for housing support
- J Continue to work with The Bridge to provide services to households at risk of losing their home



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	ACTION	PROGRESS UPDATE & OUTCOMES	COMPLETED
1.	Promote shared lets to landlords with vacant student properties (houses)	A survey of empty homes across the Borough was carried out in December 2015.	December 2015
2.	Develop guidance on the calculation of commuted sums in lieu of onsite Affordable Housing schemes	Committed sum guidance has been included in the Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	May 2017
3.	Assess evidence regarding discretionary licensing	Council responded to the Government's consultation on proposals to extend mandatory HMO licensing (Cabinet in December 2015)	December 2015
4.	Review approach to engagement with Private Landlords covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none">) Landlord Forum) Landlord Incentives 	Private Landlords were consulted in June 2015 and they indicated that their preferred communication method is an E-newsletter Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) are holding a landlord event in December 2017	January 2017
5.	Explore opportunities to use social media for an online Private Landlord forum	E-newsletters are now circulated	January 2017
6.	Monitor Choice Based Letting activity to inform Affordable Housing negotiations	Demand analysis (i.e. demand for property type, size and location) is now embedded in the process when responding to Planning consultations on all developments with an Affordable Housing requirement	January 2017
7.	Promote Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) products to Housing Register applicants with excess income	The Allocations Policy is currently being reviewed with the proposal to have maximum income eligibility criteria in line with the Government's household income threshold for LCHO Interested customers are provided with information on available LCHO products and signposted to the Homebuy agent (Orbit)	May 2017



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	ACTION	PROGRESS UPDATE & OUTCOMES	COMPLETED
8.	Convene a working group to explore improving housing options for those with mental health issues	The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group has agreed to discuss the possibility of developing a mental health service across Charnwood with a local GP practice in Loughborough	Ongoing
9.	Joint review of current Tenant Finder scheme	In March 2015, a flyer was distributed to all Charnwood households with Council Tax notifications, to identify interested landlords. Limited interest was shown in the scheme The Empty Homes Officer continues to promote Tenant Finder as an option for landlords with empty homes A Social Lettings Coordinator (12 months) to promote Tenant Finder, which should result in increased lettings through the scheme The Private Sector Housing Manager is proposing to review guidance for Tenant Finder following the appointment of the Social Lettings Coordinator	Ongoing
10.	Develop a standardised and accepted Tenant Reference for local Private Landlords	When a reference is requested by a Private Landlord, they use their own reference form to be completed by the Council's Tenancy Services and Income teams. There is now not a need for the Council to develop a standard form	May 2017
11.	Strengthen the Offender Pathway through ensuring involvement of prison staff	A Prison Release Protocol has been prepared, agreed, signed off and piloted across Charnwood. The Protocol will be presented to the Leicestershire Housing Services Partnership for roll-out across the County	Ongoing
12.	Identify and secure resources to maintain the benefits of Charnwood Connect Advice	Although funding for this Project has ceased, the initiative continues on a less formal basis	May 2017



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	ACTION	PROGRESS UPDATE & OUTCOMES	COMPLETED
13.	Review our approach to mutual exchanges to increase take-up	Details of the Scheme are available on the Council's website and are promoted by the Housing Needs team	Ongoing
14.	Identify opportunities to promote grant funded assistive technology	The Lifeline service has been promoted via Charnwood News and the Council's website Leaflets have been issued with Council Tax bills and Council tenants' rent statements, and placed in GP surgeries and selected hospital departments	Ongoing
15.	Monitor Affordable Housing completions by size and type	A Register of Affordable Housing has been developed to record both the existing stock across the Borough and completions. The Register is reviewed on a quarterly basis A Register of Pipeline Affordable Housing has been developed to record affordable housing that has been secured but not yet completed. Both registers record property type, size and tenure	Ongoing
16.	Deliver a Financial Inclusion Programme	The Council employs Financial Inclusion Officers to support Council tenants Additionally, the Council works in partnership with Charnwood Citizens Advice Bureau to support home owners and private sector tenants with debt and money advice	Ongoing
17.	Support delivery of an Older Person's Pathway and promote key partners	The Project has been evaluated and The Bridge are looking to source funding to continue with this Project	Completed March 2016



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	ACTION	PROGRESS UPDATE & OUTCOMES	COMPLETED
18.	Update evidence for a preferred split between rent and Low Cost Home Ownership	A new Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) has been undertaken and published together with the Housing Supplementary Document (SPD) for Housing which reviews and confirms a revised tenure split of 77% rent and 23% intermediate housing	May 2017
19.	Work with Leicestershire County Council to identify the necessary pipeline of housing for people with learning disabilities	Initial discussions have taken place with Leicestershire County Officers. Leicestershire County Council are currently mapping need across the County and are developing a Transforming Care Accommodation Strategy	Ongoing
20.	Improve take up of credit union facilities	The Council's Financial Inclusion Team have been working with tenants to improve take up of credit union facilities	Ongoing
21.	Review Empty Homes Enforcement Protocol	This is currently being reviewed as part of the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy	Ongoing
22.	Work with development partners to identify a location to pilot shared ownership (intermediate) bungalows	3 discount low cost bungalows have been secured through a Section 106 Agreement on a strategic housing site in Queniborough	May 2017
23.	Increase understanding of housing needs of people with autism	Leicestershire County Council are currently developing a Transforming Care Accommodation Strategy which will consider the housing needs for a range a vulnerable groups	Ongoing
24.	Ensure all key partners are involved in the development of Extra Care Schemes	Work has commenced on a 62 bed Extra Care Scheme off Derby Road, Loughborough Additionally, an Extra Care Scheme has been secured in each of the Sustainable Urban Extensions proposed across the Borough	January 2017



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	ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	OUTCOMES	DELIVER BY
1.	Explore the alternative delivery models to increase the numbers of affordable homes other than through planning gain	Housing Strategy and Support Manager) Increased supply of Affordable Housing	March 2020
2.	To adopt a flexible approach to securing affordable housing which meets the housing needs for our residents and promotes new housing sites across the Borough to support housing growth	Housing Strategy and Support Manager	) Improve the delivery of affordable housing) To encourage housing growth	March 2020
3.	Develop and publish a Housing Acquisition Policy to secure affordable housing on Section 106 sites where there is no Registered Provider interest and acquire existing properties including ex-council properties sold through Right-to-Buy to meet housing need, as well as preventing homelessness to vulnerable households in mortgage arrears	Housing Strategy and Support Manager	) Prevent owner occupiers from becoming homeless) Increase social housing stock in Charnwood	March 2020
4.	Improve access to the Private Rented Sector	Private Sector Housing Manager	) Increased lettings made through Tenant Finder	March 2020
5.	Promote Mutual Exchange to make the best use of existing stock	Principal Officer, Tenancy and Income Management) Increase the number of Mutual Exchanges) Reduce the number of tenants on the Transfer List	Ongoing



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	ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	OUTCOMES	DELIVER BY
6.	Deliver the Rough Sleeper Transition Project to provide support and improve access to accommodation for this group	Housing Needs Manager) Accommodate rough sleepers with appropriate support in place	March 2020
7.	Review housing need at a Parish level in rural areas to support the delivery of homes for local residents	Housing Strategy and Support Manager	) To provide housing to support residents who wish to live in their local parish	March 2020
8.	Review services to meet the requirement of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2016	Housing Needs Manager	) To meet the Council's statutory duties under the new Homelessness Reduction Act	Ongoing
9.	Work in partnership with the Leicestershire Councils to implement the Lightbulb Service Model across the Borough deliver an integrated model for housing support	Private Sector Housing Manager	) Enable people to remain living independently in their homes for as long as possible	March 2020
10.	Continue to work with The Bridge to provide services to households at risk of losing their home	Housing Needs Manager	) Prevent homelessness	Ongoing



