Purpose of report

This report presents proposed amendments to the Draft Strategic Housing Plan 2018-23 following consultation.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 Draft Strategic Housing Plan
Appendix 2 Equalities Impact Assessment

1.0 Background

1.1 The council’s Housing Strategy 2012-17 is now out of date. The Strategic Housing Plan for 2018-23 which will replace it and also incorporate the council’s Homelessness Strategy was submitted to Policy and Resources Committee on 16th April 2018 and approved for circulation as a consultation document.

2.0 Consultation Responses

2.1 The following responses were received on the document:
   a) Councillors wished to see more emphasis included on the housing aspirations of the district as well as housing needs
   b) The East Northamptonshire Faith Group were concerned that more consultation has not taken place on the vision document for Rushden East, including the potential to relocate the night shelter to better facilities
   c) East Northamptonshire Faith Group have also highlighted their aspiration that new night shelter facilities should include daytime activities for vulnerable people.

2.2 The Strategic Housing Plan 2018-23 has now been amended to take account of these comments. The amendments are track changed in the attached draft for ease of reference.

2.3 Subject to approval by this Sub-Committee a final draft will be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee in July for approval and adoption.

3.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

3.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and only neutral or positive impacts have been identified. The provision of housing and particularly of affordable housing will result in positive impacts for the whole community but particularly for several protected groups who may otherwise suffer disadvantages in resolving their housing needs through the market.

3.2 Such groups include:
   - Single parents (more often women), those who are pregnant or have babies
Children and young people
Older people
People with a physical impairment or learning disability
People with a long standing illness or health condition, including mental health issues
Gypsies and travellers
People who are living in isolated rural areas
People who are socially or economically excluded e.g. the homeless

3.3 The Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 There is no longer a statutory obligation to produce a Housing Strategy. However, it is good practice to do so and provides a framework to track progress towards meeting our housing aspirations for the district.

4.2 There is a statutory obligation to produce a Homelessness Strategy. As the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the accompanying Government Code of Guidance have only just been implemented it is not possible to be certain that the proposed Homelessness Strategy will be adequate. It is therefore proposed that the homelessness element of this Strategy is reviewed once the new legislation and guidance have been in place for a year.

5.0 Risk Management

5.1 There are a number of housing risks on the council’s risk register and the Strategic Housing Plan seeks to address and mitigate them all. They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk number</th>
<th>Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RM PLN 011</td>
<td>Failure to deliver sufficient housing in the district, affordable to local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM PLN 012</td>
<td>Failure to deliver an appropriate mix of housing for the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM PLN 013</td>
<td>Increase in appeals against homelessness and housing register decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM PLN 014</td>
<td>Increase in homelessness applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM PLN 016</td>
<td>Cessation of the council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM PLN 019</td>
<td>The breakdown of supported and temporary accommodation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 The council is also at risk of non-compliance with the homelessness legislation if we do not have an up to date adopted Homelessness Strategy. Furthermore there is a risk that the council will not be able to maintain a 5 year housing land supply unless it proactively encourages the right development.

6.0 Resource and Financial Implications

6.1 In addition to the officer resources required to deliver the ambitions and commitments in the Strategic Housing Plan there are significant financial implications, which have already been included in both capital and revenue budgets. These include:

- Local Plan Part 2
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Promotion of Custom and Self-Build Housing
- Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment
- Additional staffing and ICT requirements to meet our new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Potential increase in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation costs
- Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grants to voluntary organisations and of one-off payments to prevent homelessness
- Re-tender of the Housing Options Contract
- Allocation of Disabled Facilities Grants
- Responding to the additional legislation governing Houses in Multiple Occupation and enforcement powers against landlords
- Discretionary Housing Payments.

6.2 It is likely that additional resource and financial implications will be identified during the 5 year lifespan of the Strategic Housing Plan, particularly in respect of our new homelessness duties. Any additional resource requirements identified would be subject to approval by the relevant Committee or Full Council.

7.0 Constitutional Implications

7.1 There are no constitutional implications.

8.0 Implications for our Customers

8.1 The Strategic Housing Plan will have considerable impacts on our customers and on future and current residents of the district as a result of
  - increased housing provision, both market and affordable
  - improved service delivery, particularly in relation to the allocation of housing and prevention and relief of homelessness
  - improved use and upkeep of existing housing stock
  - support for people in their homes and communities.

9.0 Corporate Outcomes

9.1 The Strategic Housing Plan helps to deliver the following Corporate Outcomes:
  - Good Quality of Life – good quality, safe accommodation affects all areas of life including health, employment, education and relationships
  - Good Value for Money – the strategy sets out the work to be undertaken and the services to be provided, and seeks to deliver these in the most resource efficient way
  - Effective Partnership Working – the Strategic Housing Plan seeks to work in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations, registered providers and other developers
  - High Quality Service Delivery – the strategy sets out the work to be undertaken and the services to be provided, and seeks to deliver these in the most efficient way

10.0 Recommendation

10.1 The Sub-Committee is recommended to
  i) Approve that the Draft Strategic Housing Plan at Appendix 1 is submitted to Policy and Resources Committee for adoption
ii) Note the contents of the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 2.

*(Reason – to ensure that the strategic direction of the housing service is fit for purpose and accords with legislation).*
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Foreword

I am pleased to present East Northamptonshire Council’s Strategic Housing Plan for 2018–2023. It addresses the key housing issues affecting everyone in East Northamptonshire from new housing development to homelessness.

Housing is about more than just bricks and mortar. It is about our homes and affects our quality of life. We have a basic need for shelter but the difference between good and bad housing can affect everything in our lives including our health, employment choices, educational chances and relationships.

Since our last Housing Strategy, we have seen a number of changes to affordable housing and welfare benefits with reduced subsidies to Registered Providers, increased limitations on rent payments and more emphasis on low cost home ownership initiatives. In addition, homelessness has been on the increase, particularly as a result of the reduction in private rented accommodation available.

The Homelessness Reduction Act, implemented in April 2018, will add to the homelessness pressures the council are experiencing by placing additional duties on us. In addition, pressures from an expanding and ageing population and high property prices in the rural areas, will mean it will be harder to address these housing issues.

We remain committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a suitable property which they can afford and which meets their aspirations. We will therefore encourage good quality housing development in the district, including affordable rented housing and low cost home ownership initiatives, for those who are unable to purchase a property through the housing market.

We will encourage the provision of a better mix and balance of homes. So we will be seeking more higher value properties in the towns in the south of the district, and more affordable homes in the north and the villages where prices are higher. We will embrace innovation in delivery and we will encourage Custom and Self Build housing, particularly on our large scale developments such as the proposed Sustainable Urban Extension at Rushden East and at Tresham Garden Village.

We must also ensure that the existing stock in the district is kept in good condition and is used to its best advantage. In addition, support needs, particularly for older people, need to be provided for to ensure people can remain independent in their own homes, despite challenges in terms of how support will be funded in the future.

We cannot deliver an effective housing strategy on our own. We will continue to work in partnership with a range of organisations, stakeholders, and of course our communities, to deliver our aspirations.

Councillor Steven North, Leader of the Council
Executive Summary

This Strategic Housing Plan has been developed against a backdrop of considerable actual and proposed changes in national policy direction, including the introduction of neighbourhood planning, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, welfare reforms, an increase in the regulation of private sector housing, and new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

East Northamptonshire is an area delivering housing growth. The district is largely rural with a population of almost 91,000 people. It includes the towns of Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston, as well as over 40 villages. The population is ageing – by 2039, the number of people over the age of 85 will increase by over 200%. Homelessness in the district is also rising.

In order to meet the challenges facing the district, the council has four housing priorities, each with a number of key actions, as follows:

**Enabling new housing delivery to meet the needs of the district**

We will:

- continue to encourage and enable a variety of new housing schemes from large scale developments such as the Sustainable Urban Extension at Rushden East and Tresham Garden Village, to regenerating brownfield sites in our towns, to providing small numbers of affordable homes on exception sites in the villages
- develop our Local Plan Part 2, ensuring that we maintain a deliverable 5 year housing land supply and a balance between housing and economic growth
- strive to meet the needs for affordable housing in the district, including rented and low cost home ownership, as well as for specialist housing e.g. for older people
- work with our communities, other local authorities in the county, the Clinical Commissioning Groups and Neighbourhood Planning Groups to deliver the type and quality of housing the district needs, and which meets the aspirations of our residents and promotes economic growth in the district.

**Preventing and reducing homelessness**

We will:

- Proactively implement the new duties imposed by the Homelessness Reduction Act and continue to prioritise homelessness prevention
- Re-tender the Housing Options Contract to ensure the continuation and improvement of our homelessness prevention and relief work
- Continue to work with temporary accommodation providers and registered providers to increase and make best use of the accommodation available
- Continue to allocate grants to prevent and alleviate homelessness
• Endeavour to reduce rough sleeping, and the problems associated with it, and continue to provide funding for emergency accommodation during severe weather.

**Improving the use and upkeep of existing housing**

We will:

• Ensure privately rented properties meet the required standards of repair, energy efficiency and safety and implement enforcement powers where necessary
• Ensure access to Disabled Facilities Grants and energy efficiency grants and loans and ensure the resources are put to best use
• Ensure Houses in Multiple Occupation continue to meet all the necessary standards and implement the new licensing legislation
• Continue to reduce the number of long term empty properties.

**Supporting people in their homes and communities**

We will:

• encourage more provision of accessible properties for older people and those with disabilities, with support provided as appropriate
• make best use of resources available for grants and benefit payments
• work with the health sector to improve discharge arrangements to appropriate accommodation
• work with our partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to improve the quality of life and safety of our residents.

**Monitoring the Strategic Housing Plan**

An Action Plan will track and monitor progress towards meeting our aspirations for housing in the district. This will be a working document which will evolve to respond to and reflect national and local change throughout the 5 year lifetime of this Strategic Housing Plan.
Section 1 – The Strategic Setting

The National Strategic Setting
There have been considerable changes to the national policy framework for both housing and planning since the last housing strategy document was produced in 2012. These include:

- **Neighbourhood planning**, introduced under the [Localism Act 2011](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25), gives local communities more influence over development in their local areas. Neighbourhood planning is now being taken up by a number of town and parish councils in the district, with several plans at differing stages of the process. Neighbourhood planning allows communities, led by Town and Parish Councils, to:
  - Set their own local level policies for determining planning applications, adding local direction and distinctiveness to strategic Local Plan and national planning policies
  - Make site specific housing allocations.

- **The Housing and Planning Act 2016** introduced
  - the ‘starter home’, a home available to first time buyers between 23 and 39 at a discount of 20% - although Government policy has now moved towards other low cost home ownership initiatives
  - the extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants to give them the same rights as local authority housing tenants. Regional pilots to trial how this might work are underway.

- **The Housing White Papers ‘Fixing our broken housing market’ and ‘The right homes in the right places’** consultations set out government proposals to
  - make changes to the planning system to facilitate development and build homes faster
  - ensure the required infrastructure is delivered at the right time
  - support smaller builders, local authorities and housing associations to build
  - support building for rent and custom and self-build initiatives
  - provide more support for first time buyers alongside other affordable provision
  - introduce a revised methodology for calculating housing need.

- A number of changes are proposed to the [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework), including
  - broadening the definition of affordable housing so it includes a wider range of low cost home ownership opportunities
  - increasing density of developments around commuter hubs
supporting sustainable new settlements and development on brownfield land and small sites
• supporting delivery of housing allocated in local plans.

• The **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** being implemented in April 2018 will substantially increase the duties owed by local authorities to homeless people and people threatened with homelessness including:
  • a prevention duty once homelessness is threatened within 56 days
  • provision of temporary accommodation for ‘intentionally homeless’ households for 56 days
  • increased duties to ‘non-priority’ applicants
  • ensuring services are designed to meet the needs of specific groups
  • provision of Personal Housing Plans for applicants.

• **Welfare Reforms** including
  • the introduction of Universal Credit which changes the way that benefits, including Housing Benefit, are paid to ensure that everyone is always better off in work
  • the introduction of the Benefit Cap
  • the introduction of Council Tax Support
  • the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy.

• **Further regulation of the private rented sector** including
  • greater powers to local authorities to prevent retaliatory evictions and to ensure repairs are undertaken
  • banning Orders for landlords who disregard the law and the safety of their tenants and Government approved Redress Schemes
  • expanding the House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing requirements
  • higher Energy Performance requirements and ensuring properties are fitted with smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
  • all tenants deposits must be placed in a Tenancy Deposit Scheme
  • a ban on upfront fees by letting agents.

**The Local Strategic Setting**

A number of local strategic documents have also been developed which impact on this Strategic Housing Plan. These include:

• The Part 1 Local Plan (**North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy** (JCS) 2011-31) was adopted in July 2016 and sets the strategic planning framework for the 4 council areas which comprise North Northamptonshire (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough). Part 2 (site specific) Local Plans are currently being developed by the 4 councils individually. Initial
consultation on East Northamptonshire’s Part 2 Local Plan was undertaken at the beginning of 2017. It is likely that this will be adopted around 2019-20.

- **Northamptonshire’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020** is jointly produced by the Northamptonshire councils, health service commissioners and providers, the voluntary sector, the police and the University of Northampton. It sets out the County vision to ‘Improve the health and wellbeing of all people in Northamptonshire and reduce health inequalities by enabling people to help themselves’ and the following priorities:
  - Every child gets the best start
  - Taking responsibility and making informed choices
  - Promoting independence and quality of life for older adults
  - Creating an environment for all people to flourish.

- The Council’s **Corporate Plan 2016-19** sets out East Northamptonshire Council’s vision of ‘Working with our communities to sustain a thriving district’ and sets out a number of relevant key priorities:
  - Sustainable development – aim to accommodate sensible levels of growth while preserving the character of our historic towns and villages.
  - Regeneration and economic development – work with the private sector to bring investment into the area and to reverse the decline of some of our towns, working with local communities to achieve their aspirations for their local area.
  - Customer-focused services – we will also work even more closely with our partners to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.

- The Council’s **Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020 “Enterprising East Northants”** expands on the council’s vision and prioritises enabling the delivery of sustainable job growth that will make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life for residents whilst enhancing the quality of place and securing prosperity in the local economy.

- The **East Northants Community Safety Partnership (CSP)** is the partnership body overseeing the work to reduce crime and disorder across the district. The CSP influences the day-to-day management of cases and complaints relating to ASB, domestic abuse and hate crime. It recognises that homelessness can be a key factor in both its priority areas and in the work to manage cases by the council and its partners. Its current priorities are:
  - tackling gang-related crime and preventing young people becoming involved in gangs
  - tackling the street drinking and criminal activities in town centres
  - supporting targeted interventions that tackle youth-related ASB
- tackling drug-taking and substance misuse in targeted areas.

- The Council has adopted comprehensive **Safeguarding Policies and Procedures** to ensure instances or suspicions of abuse and neglect are dealt with effectively, in relation to both children and vulnerable adults.

- The Council recognises the importance of tackling a child’s or family’s problems as early as possible. Its **Children, Families - Early Help Strategy** sets out a framework to identify and provide the right type of help early on.
Section 2 - District Profile

The District
East Northamptonshire is a largely rural district which covers an area of approximately 197 square miles. It is home to a population of almost 91,000 people, living in about 39,000 households. The area includes the towns of Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston, which account for about 76% of the population. The remainder of residents live in the over 40 villages of the district, some of which have no local facilities and most of which are not served by public transport.

The district is part of the North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) which also includes the council areas of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. We are centrally located and close to strategic transport routes including the A14, A45, A43 and the M1. We are on the edge of the Oxford to Cambridge corridor. Whilst we have no railway station in the district, access to the mainline service to London is available from stations nearby in Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Bedford and Peterborough.

Our Population

In 2016 East Northamptonshire's population was estimated to be 90,800. By 2039 this figure is set to increase to 102,700. Our population is ageing – by 2039 the proportion of 65-89 year olds will increase by 66%, while the proportion of people aged over 90 will nearly treble.

In addition, Office for National Statistics (ONS) population estimates for 2016-2039 predict:
- A 208% increase in people over the age of 85
- An 135% increase in those over 75
- A 21% increase in those aged between 55-74
Social Indicators

The average household income for East Northamptonshire in 2015 was almost £40,000. However, average incomes vary considerably across the district and many households have lower incomes, particularly if there is only one household occupant.

East Northamptonshire has a lower proportion of out-of work benefit claimants than England as a whole. Nevertheless, in August 2017, there were 590 claimants.

In May 2017, nearly 4,000 households were in receipt of housing benefit. Our weekly Housing Benefit bill is just over £345,000.

The district is relatively affluent but there are pockets of deprivation. According to the Indices of Deprivation (2015), East Northamptonshire was ranked 217th out of all 326 English authorities (where 1st would be the most deprived). The table puts this figure into context in terms of the surrounding districts.

Housing Need and Demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East Northants bed size need</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>1163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As at 1st April 2018 there were 1163 households accepted onto our housing register. The complete bedroom breakdown is illustrated by the adjacent table.

During 2017, 149 households made a homeless application and 80 (54%) were accepted as homeless.

Further information about the district can be found in our State of the District 2017 report and in our ward based Housing Mix Requirement Assessments.
In 2009 (updated in 2012 and again in 2015), consultants Housing Vision undertook a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) across North Northamptonshire, using existing demographic, social and housing data to identify the

- dynamics of the local housing market
- choices available to local people
- current and future relationship between need, demand and supply
- projected future requirement for housing
- interventions which might improve housing choice in the area.

The findings of the SHMA demonstrate that

- the highest theoretical requirement is for 1 bedroom properties – not just for affordable housing but also for owner-occupation – although some areas of the district have relatively high proportions of 1 bedroom properties. In addition, it should be noted that too many 1 bedroom properties may not be a sustainable mix on many developments and will not meet residents’ aspirations for a spare bedroom
- there is a substantial need for 2 and 3 bedroom properties – although again these property sizes could be increased to allow for aspirations for a spare bedroom
- there is theoretically little need for 4 bedroom properties – however, larger and village sites will still need some 4 bedroom properties to ensure developments are sustainable and larger properties may be desirable in areas where there is a predominance of smaller properties
- there is a significant demand for shared ownership – an affordable tenure where the occupier part owns and part rents the property.

### Whole district housing requirements to 2031 – SHMA updated 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>1 bed</th>
<th>2 bed</th>
<th>3 bed</th>
<th>4+ bed</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td>Social Rent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2,734</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Affordable Rent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Shared Ownership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Private Rent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>676</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Owner Occupier</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,468</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4,265</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,862</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>2,479</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8,401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 2017, the council undertook some research to establish whether the economic prosperity of the district could be improved by encouraging the development of higher value properties. The resulting report 'Informing East Northamptonshire’s Housing Mix’ concluded that:
• whilst the SHMA provided basic information on the numbers of properties required to meet needs, more sophistication was required to address preferences and aspirations and to enable the development of a wide range of housing options, including for households on higher incomes
• the imbalance of more higher value properties in the north of the district and more affordable homes in the south needs to be addressed by encouraging more higher value properties in the south and more affordable homes in the north
• large scale strategic developments in the district would provide significant opportunities to deliver the full range of housing. However the premium housing product is closely related to desirable locations and the potential for high value is limited within the Sustainable Urban Extensions, at least until the later years of development. The potential of smaller and windfall sites to deliver higher value homes therefore needs to be explored
• larger properties would contribute to job creation through the retention and immigration of higher income households and the potential to run a business from home
• the supply of larger and higher value homes could be increased to approximately 50 per annum
• there is a strong market for high quality downsizing properties, again approximately 50 per annum. These properties would in turn free up larger, higher value second hand stock
• the presumption against 4 bedroom and larger dwellings should be reversed
• there is potential to encourage custom building for higher value homes.
Section 3 - Our Housing

Housing Stock

In order to fully understanding the housing make-up of East Northamptonshire, it is important to assess all available housing stock. The 2011 Census provides the most accurate and up-to-date data on existing housing stock in the district. Based on this data it is estimated that there are 35,662 occupied properties in the district.

The average household size for the district is 2.43 persons (2016). Even allowing for people’s aspirations to have a spare room, there is a mismatch between the size of properties and the number of people in households. There are considerably more one and two person households than one and two bedroom properties and more 3 and 4 bedroom properties than 3 and 4 person plus households.

Empty Property

Empty properties are essential to the housing market to ensure that there are properties available and to ensure the turnover of market sales continues. However, empty properties are not acceptable if they are not either being repaired or on the market for sale or to let. These are a wasted resource and can also cause issues in their locality. East Northamptonshire has a successful empty property project and Empty Property Strategy that has been running for more than 5 years. It concentrates on bringing the most problematic properties back into use but also assists those that need a little help and advice to enable this.

The number of empty properties fluctuates on a daily basis however on average there are 370 long term empty properties in the district. Long term empty is defined as properties empty for 6 months or more. This represents less than 1% of the total housing stock.

Tenure

The Census 2011 also provided information on the tenure split of properties in the district. The majority of the stock is owner-occupied (71%) and there is a fairly even split between private and social rented stock.
In 2001 East Northamptonshire Council transferred all of its housing stock to East Northamptonshire Homes (now Spire Homes).

Although we no longer own the stock, we maintain a social housing stock list which provides details on the types of properties our Registered Providers have. There are currently 5645 affordable homes in the district (September 2017).

58% of the affordable housing stock consists of houses, 17% bungalows and 22% flats.

3 bedroom houses represent a large proportion of the available affordable housing stock.
The demand for affordable housing remains high. From January – December 2017 a total of 16,255 bids were placed via Homes Direct for the 529 properties available. The majority of interest was for 2 bedroom properties, with 50 x 2 bedroom flats and 47 x 2 bedroom houses receiving over 50 bids each.

**Affordability**

Three bedroom properties make up almost half of the properties in the district. As this is the most prevalent size of property, it is important to appreciate the cost to purchase such a property. The table below provides a snapshot of average house prices in the district in May 2018 and demonstrates the substantially higher prices in Oundle and Thrapston.

---

### Average Price of Properties in East Northants (Zoopla and Rightmove, May 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Average Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oundle</td>
<td>£347,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raunds</td>
<td>£246,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrapston</td>
<td>£301,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higham Ferrers</td>
<td>£269,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rushden</td>
<td>£230,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irthlingborough</td>
<td>£220,040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Overall house prices in the district are below the national average of £243,520 (Gov.uk, 2017). The table below provides a comparison of house prices in the North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Area in 2017.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Average Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Northamptonshire</td>
<td>£229,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>£201,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>£174,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellingborough</td>
<td>£202,202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

However, given that average household incomes in the district are approximately £40,000, and allowing for a 10% deposit, a mortgage in excess of £200,000, or 5 times average household income would be required to purchase an average 3 bedroom
house in the district. For many this is not an option and low cost home ownership initiatives such as Shared Ownership and Rent to Buy have therefore become popular options. The council has been, and will continue to be, pro-active in promoting these tenures.

For many residents of the district, renting is the only option, often because they are on low incomes or because they are unable to provide the deposit required by mortgage lenders. Rents in the private sector in the district are high and demand is considerable. Applicants for privately rented accommodation need to be able to pay administration fees for references and a security deposit bond (usually the equivalent of a month’s rent plus £100) in addition to the rental charge. Finding these additional funds can inhibit some people from taking up a private tenancy. For housing benefit claimants Local Housing Allowance (LHA) acts as a cap to the maximum amount of benefit that can be claimed towards a private sector rent. The tables below show the gap between market rents and the LHA in 2017.

### Market Rent vs LHA (North)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Market Rent North of the District (£)</th>
<th>Local Housing Allowance (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Bedroom Flat</td>
<td>119 92.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Bedroom Flat</td>
<td>211 115.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two bedroom House</td>
<td>172 115.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Bedroom House</td>
<td>183 132.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Bedroom House</td>
<td>357 168.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Market Rent vs LHA (South)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Market Rent South of the District (£)</th>
<th>Local Housing Allowance (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Bedroom Flat</td>
<td>115 82.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Bedroom Flat</td>
<td>145 105.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two bedroom House</td>
<td>150 105.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Bedroom House</td>
<td>175 123.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Bedroom House</td>
<td>230 164.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rents for existing properties in the affordable housing sector have been subject to a flat 1% rent cut in 2016/17 and 2017/18, years 1 and 2 of a four year programme to reduce rents. Although this is good news for tenants it has meant that Housing Associations’ income has been reduced and consequently there is less money available to fund new developments.

New properties that are completed are subject to the district rent setting policy which restricts rents to Local Housing Allowance rates to ensure that they remain affordable.
The gulf between private sector rents and those levied by affordable Housing Providers continued to increase during 2017 with the differential ranging from 41% for a one bedroom property to over a 100% for larger family homes.
Section 4 - Housing Priorities

Enabling new housing delivery to meet the needs and aspirations of the district

Preventing and reducing Homelessness

Improving the use and upkeep of existing housing

Supporting people in their homes and communities
Housing Priority

Enabling new housing delivery to meet the needs and aspirations of the district

East Northamptonshire is part of the North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA), an area of considerable housing growth. The Joint Planning and Delivery Unit (JPDU) reports to the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) which is made up of elected representatives of the four councils in North Northamptonshire (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough). The JPDU has prepared the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) which was adopted in July 2016. The JCS is the strategic Part 1 Local Plan for the area and outlines the big picture to be developed in more detail through the Part 2 Local Plans being prepared by the four constituent local planning authorities and through Neighbourhood Plans prepared by Neighbourhood Planning Groups (reporting to Town or Parish Councils).

East Northamptonshire is a diverse area ranging from the predominantly urban south of the district (south of the A14) focused on Rushden (growth town) and the market towns of Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Raunds. The north of the district (noth of the A14) is predominantly rural and includes the market towns of Thrapston and Oundle in the north and over 40 villages, many of which are poorly served by facilities and public transport. Enabling new housing delivery has to meet the challenges that such diversity presents, with different approaches required - from encouraging large scale developments such as the proposed 2,500 Sustainable Urban Extension at Rushden East and the 1,500 homes at Tresham Garden Village, to providing small numbers of affordable homes on exception sites in the villages.

What we have achieved

- Adopted the JCS (Local Plan Part 1) in 2016 providing the strategic planning direction (including housing requirements) for the district up to 2013
- Undertaken initial consultation (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, Regulation 18) for our District wide Local Plan Part 2 (site specific policies)
- Delivered 2575 new homes (2011-16) exceeding our baseline JCS target (2520) for the period
• Delivered 649 new affordable homes, of which 214 are shared ownership and will assist households to get onto the property ladder and tie in with the Government’s strategy to increase homeownership opportunities.

• Delivered 75 new affordable homes in rural areas (of which 24 were shared ownership) including our first mixed tenure scheme on an exception site. This comprised of 6 affordable homes and 5 small open market homes with priority given to people with a connection to Titchmarsh.
- Hosted a public event with Registered Partners and Mortgage Providers to promote a better understanding of Shared Ownership in the District
- Commissioned a report on improving the housing mix in East Northamptonshire to ensure that the right homes are available to improve the economic prosperity of the district
- Commissioned a report to feed into the the housing mix for Tresham Garden Village
- Established the Rushden East Project Board to steer the development to ensure it will be a sustainable community addressing the needs of local people as well as delivering growth ambitions
- Progressed with partners the delivery of a Master Plan for the new Tresham Garden Village at the former Deenethorpe Airfield
- Maintaining a deliverable 5 year housing land supply, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 47)
- Assisted two Neighbourhood Planning Groups (Chelveston cum Caldecott and Higham Ferrers) in successfully completing Neighbourhood Plans, with land allocations to deliver 38 dwellings (Chelveston cum Caldecott: rural) and 300 dwellings (Higham Ferrers: urban)
- Contributed to the commissioning of a countywide study into the accommodation and support needs of older people
- Commissioned, in conjunction with the JPDU, the Government’s Custom and Self-Build Task Force to advise us on how to promote custom and self-build development at scale.

**Future action**

With ambitious growth plans we aim to not only meet the needs of established local communities in the District but also to assist in the creation of new communities by planning for and delivering a range of new housing opportunities throughout the District. To assist in this aim we will:

- develop our Local Plan Part 2 in the light of the Regulation 18 consultation responses and evidence base to ensure delivery of housing in accordance with the JCS requirements and emerging methodology for calculating objectively assessed area needs for housing
- allocate land to meet housing targets (8400 dwellings 2011-2031) in the Local Plan to ensure that the identified housing needs of the District are specifically provided for eg older persons housing
- continue to strive to meet the needs for affordable housing in the district, including new low cost home ownership initiatives, ensuring that affordable housing thresholds and targets in the Joint Core Strategy are adhered to
- continue to work with Neighbourhood Planning Groups to assist them to deliver their Neighbourhood Plans
• undertake consultation with local residents and stakeholders on the Rushden East Draft Masterplan in late 2018
• work with our local authority partners across the county, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and Neighbourhood Planning Groups to deliver solutions for older people’s housing and support needs
• maintain a deliverable 5 year housing land supply
• prepare a Supplementary Planning Document on housing mix in the district to provide detailed guidance on the type and size of units required, including larger properties to improve the economic prosperity of the district
• promote Custom and Self-Build options, particularly on large developments such as Rushden East and Tresham Garden Village
• engage with local and national developers to monitor market conditions and promote the type of housing that is required in the District
• assess publicly owned land for potential housing developments
• monitor approved planning applications to encourage housing development
• work with colleagues in North Northamptonshire to update our information on the needs of the Gypsy and Travellers for further sites in the district and how these might be delivered
• deliver JCS job targets (7200 jobs, 2011-2031), to maintain a balance between housing and economic growth.
Housing Priority

Preventing and reducing homelessness

Homelessness in the district has been increasing steadily over the last few years. There is a considerable continuing upward trend in homeless applications and acceptances as well as homelessness preventions.

Prevention work has kept the homelessness applications and acceptances figures low relative to other areas over the last few years, due to early intervention which prevents homelessness occurring. A more accurate picture of the work undertaken on homelessness in the district can therefore be judged by adding the acceptances and preventions together, as in the top line of the graph.

Keeping the use of bed and breakfast as low as possible has always been a priority for the Council. Not only is bed and breakfast expensive, it is very unpopular with homeless households. We have very little available in the district and often have to use hotels outside the district, which can be extremely disruptive.

Reasons for homelessness are varied - from relatives not being able to accommodate, to relationship breakdown, to rent and mortgage arrears. However, there has been a recent substantial increase in the number of homeless applications as a result of the loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs), which now account for over half of all homeless cases in the district. These private sector tenants have no security of tenure and if the landlord chooses to sell the property or stop letting it they have no option but to leave.
The homelessness legislation

The primary homelessness legislation, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, is the statutory foundation for preventing homelessness and providing assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness and extend the priority need categories.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, implemented in April 2018, has significantly reformed the homelessness legislation by placing substantial new duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have a ‘priority need’. These include:

- a requirement to provide all applicants with Personal Housing Plans, setting out the actions to be taken to prevent and alleviate their homelessness
- an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage
- a new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

The increased duties will result in an increase in applications and workload for the Housing Services and Housing Options Teams. The challenge for the council will be to ensure that the use of Bed and Breakfast and other temporary accommodation remains as low as possible.
What we have achieved

- the Housing Options Contract with Midland Heart Housing Association (known as Homes Direct), originally awarded for 4 years in April 2012, has been very successful and was extended in April 2016 for a further 3 years. The table below shows the range of housing advice that is provided under the contract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice Sought</th>
<th>Number of cases 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Register Enquiries</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Landlord Evictions</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/ Friend Eviction</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Breakdown</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Relationship Breakdown</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent/ Mortgage Arrears</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability/ Benefit Advice</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice by Housing Association</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice on Homeless Application</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1397</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- the housing advice and homelessness prevention work undertaken continues to ensure that homelessness is kept to a minimum in the district
- Flexible Homelessness Support Grant has been allocated to provide an additional Homelessness Prevention Officer under the Housing Options Contract to help meet the council’s additional duties
- The Community Support Grant scheme supports voluntary sector organisations to deliver services that contribute to its corporate outcomes. It funds specialist debt advice and interventions through the Community Law Service (Northampton and County) to help prevent homelessness
- the council works closely with temporary accommodation providers in the district to ensure that appropriate accommodation and support services are available and the use of bed and breakfast is minimised.
- The council currently provides funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant Fund to
  - East Northamptonshire Community Services for the Night Shelter
  - Midland Heart for 2 supported housing projects, Shoemaker Court for families and High Street South for single people
  - Mayday Trust for the Personal Transitions Service, coaching single homeless people to assist in homelessness prevention
- We are one of the partners (with Kettering and Corby Borough Councils) which delivered the Turning Point Project, providing accommodation and support for non-priority homeless single people, focusing on those involved with health and criminal justice agencies, supporting customers moving from institutions to independent living. Set up with Government funding, the project is now financially self sufficient and has plans to expand
We purchased and refurbished 2 properties in Rushden and leased them to the Mayday Trust to provide accommodation for non-priority homeless 18-30 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)

- countywide protocols have been developed with Children’s Services for Care Leavers and for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds
- our Housing Allocation Policy was completely reviewed during 2017 and again revised in 2018 to take account of the Homelessness Reduction Act ensuring a fair and transparent framework for the allocation of affordable housing and helping to prevent homelessness and assist those with medical needs.
- a Service Level Agreement signed by most of the Registered Providers participating in the council’s Choice Based Lettings Scheme, ensures that applicants are considered fairly and that nominations to properties are appropriate and provided in a timely manner
- tenancy training modules have been developed to be completed by all housing applicants to ensure that new tenants will be aware of their rights and responsibilities in taking on a tenancy, including the costs involved, in a bid to reduce levels of tenancy failure.

Future action

Our homelessness strategy

In line with the new Government Code of Guidance, our Homelessness Strategy must include a strategy for preventing homelessness in the district, as well as for dealing with it. The legislation and the Code of Guidance are very new. As such our initial strategy to prevent and relieve homelessness is detailed below. This will be kept under review over the coming year to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate under the new legislation and guidance. A full review of homelessness and revision of our strategy will be undertaken a year after implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Advice and information - Along with our housing contractor we will ensure advice and information is available on:
  - Preventing homelessness
  - Securing accommodation when homeless
  - The rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
  - The duties of the council
  - Help that is available and how to access it.

Early Identification is important in preventing homelessness and early applications for assistance maximise the time and opportunities available to prevent homelessness. Advice and information provided will help enable people to take action themselves where possible, and encourage them to seek assistance from the council in good time. We will engage with public bodies to assist with earlier identification. The Northamptonshire district and borough authorities have agreed to develop a local protocol for referrals from appropriate agencies, with a single point of contact for submitting referrals, to be shared with all relevant local agencies and accessible on the council’s website.

Pre-crisis intervention - We will ensure that we operate joint working arrangements with other council departments, such as Housing Benefit and Community
Development, to ensure a proactive joint approach where a household may be at risk of homelessness in the future.

**Preventing recurring homelessness** - We will advise households of advice and support available to try to ensure that repeat homelessness is kept to a minimum. This may be via referral to money advice or tenancy support services.

**Partnership arrangements** – We are already party to a number of joint protocols around preventing homelessness and assisting in securing temporary and move on accommodation. We will continue to work with both statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure a joint approach to assist in the prevention of homelessness.

**The Homelessness Reduction Act** will necessitate substantial changes in the way that we deal with homelessness applications and we will need to implement the changes in conjunction with our Housing Options Contractor. **Specifically we will:**

- continue to prioritise homelessness prevention and to use homelessness prevention tools wherever possible
- respond to the revised administrative, monitoring and reporting requirements, purchasing new software and revising our notification letters and procedures
- keep staffing requirements under review in both the Housing Services and Housing Options Teams so we can continue to provide an adequate service to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- use Flexible Homelessness Support Grant to operate a discretionary fund to prevent and alleviate homelessness
- support the development of the countywide pre-eviction protocol with registered providers
- continue to work with temporary accommodation providers in the district to ensure that best use is made of what is available, and that residents are moved on to more permanent accommodation as soon as possible
- continue to work with registered providers to increase the affordable and temporary accommodation available
- investigate near market rent and low cost home ownership initiatives to provide alternatives to affordable rented accommodation for some households
- continue to allocate Homelessness Prevention Grants to organisations providing value for money services which prevent and alleviate homelessness
- **work with key partners to improve the night shelter provision and to investigate the potential to provide daytime facilities**
- continue to fund the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to protect rough sleepers in periods of prolonged severe weather
- endeavour to engage rough sleepers with services to help them end their rough sleeping
- work with key partners and communities to tackle anti-social behaviour problems associated with homelessness and rough sleeping
- develop further on-line tenancy training modules to ensure that tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities
- re-tender the Housing Options Contract to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place from April 2019 to continue our homelessness prevention and relief work
• continue to monitor and review our Allocation Policy to ensure that available housing is allocated fairly and to maximise homelessness prevention.
• expand the Turning Point Project in the district, adding an additional property to assist more clients.
Housing Priority

Improving the use and upkeep of existing housing

Whilst there is a great deal of new house building going on in the district, the majority of the housing stock is older and as such may not always be fit for purpose, either due to disrepair or because it is not suitable for the occupiers because of a disability or mobility issues. Housing is a scarce resource and as such it is vital that the homes we have are used to the best possible effect.

Most properties in the district are in the private sector with 70% of householders being owner-occupiers and a further 12% renting from landlords privately. The Private Sector Housing Team deals with disrepair and landlord/tenant issues in the private sector. The team also allocates Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for aids and adaptations to enable occupiers to remain in their homes.

Most of the remainder of the stock (16%) is owned by Registered Providers (RPs), previously known as housing associations. RP properties are allocated through the council’s Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme, according to the criteria in our Housing Allocation Policy.

What we have achieved

- **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)** - there are currently 5 (soon to be 7) licensed HMO’s in the district that are three or more storey properties. These premises hold a 5 year licence and are inspected by both Environmental Services and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Services. Properties that do not currently require licensing are also jointly inspected to ensure they meet the required standards.

- **Empty properties** - Since the project began 5 years ago we have brought more than 230 properties back into use. There continues to be a large number of long term empty properties that are being focussed on to bring them back into use. We have been successful in Compulsory Purchasing one long term empty with the aim of returning it to the housing market as soon as possible. This enforcement option will continue to be used on the most appropriate properties.

- **Energy efficiency** - alongside the other councils in the county we are part of the Northamptonshire Warm Homes Group. This group works together to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and jointly bid for any funding that is available to assist in these aims. Previous schemes have included the installation of external wall insulation, boiler replacements and dealing with hard to heat properties.

- **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)** – we have a detailed Private Sector Housing Grants Policy which explains the DFG process and conditions. DFGs
are a means tested grant available to those who need an adaptation to live independently and safely in their home. It is available across all tenures subject to the owners permission. The majority of DFGs are installed in owner occupied properties with level access showers and stairlifts being the most common type of grant.

- **Affordable housing**
  - the council’s Housing Allocation Policy has been completely reviewed during 2017 to ensure it continues to provide a fair and transparent framework for the allocation of the available affordable housing. It now incorporates a joint assessment process for DFG and housing applications to ensure best use is made of available housing stock and grant resources
  - our Service Level Agreement with Registered Providers advertising properties through the council’s Choice Based Lettings Scheme ensures that applicants are considered fairly and that nominations to properties are appropriate and provided in a timely manner
  - Registered Providers are encouraged to deliver housing which
    - meets the needs identified in the district and assists with the discharge of the council’s homelessness duties
    - remains affordable by ensuring that rents are kept within the Local Housing Allowance
    - provides security of tenure by providing tenancies for a minimum of 5 years.

**Future action**

- Ensure properties rented out through the private sector meet the required standards in terms of repair, energy efficiency, smoke and CO2 monitors
- **Investigate ways of working with private landlords to encourage them to assist us with our housing duties**
- Provide all owner occupiers and tenants with a signposting location for the energy efficiency grants and loans available
- Continue to reduce the number of long term empty properties in the district through negotiation, support and, where necessary, enforcement
- Continue to provide Disabled Facilities Grants to those eligible across the district to ensure people can remain at home living independently for longer
- Ensure that where an adapted property is needed by an applicant on the waiting list that all options are explored to prevent needless or incompatible adaptations from being implemented
- Keep the council’s Housing Allocation Policy under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose and continues to ensure the fair allocation of the available affordable housing
- Respond to the expansion to legislation governing houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) to include properties that are two storeys and accommodate five or more people not forming a single household. It is estimated an additional 100 properties will require licensing. We are working with neighbouring councils to develop a smooth, clear and consistent implementation process for all applicants, whilst ensuring all HMOs continue to meet all fire, repair, space and amenity standards.
- To continue to implement the new Civil Penalty Notice enforcement powers where a landlord has failed to undertake required works.
Housing Priority

Supporting people in their homes and communities

Housing is about more than bricks and mortar. Many people require support in order to be able to live independently. Most people with support needs will receive that support within their own homes, whether that home is owner-occupied or rented from a housing association or private landlord. An older person may require help with housework or personal care, with managing money or claiming benefits. They may need adaptations to their home to enable them to be discharged from hospital, or a move to more suitable accommodation. As of February 2018 there were 172 households on our housing register with mobility problems.

Equally important are the communities in which our residents live. Our Community Partnerships Team works in close contact with community groups and partners in the police, social services and the voluntary sector to deliver the council’s vision of ‘Working with our communities to sustain a thriving district’. The range of work and initiatives helps reduce crime and anti-social behaviour so our residents live and work in places that are safer, healthier and more prosperous.

What we have achieved

- Our Housing Allocation Policy has been completely reviewed to ensure that the accommodation available is fairly allocated. We have introduced
  - income assessments for all applicants
  - bidding restrictions for applicants whose banding is enhanced for medical needs to ensure they are allocated properties which meet their needs
- Developed a single joint application process for people requiring moves and/or adaptations so that their needs can be realistically assessed to find the right solution, whether adaptation works or a move to more suitable accommodation
- Working in partnership with our Registered Providers, we have
  - provided funding to convert a house into a fully wheelchair accessible home for a family
  - provided funding to convert outdated bedsits in Almshouses in Rushden to provide two refurbished bungalows
  - enabled a scheme for older people of 29 flats for sale and shared ownership at Castle Court in Thrapston
  - enabled the provision of 2 flats for people with learning disabilities in Thrapston
  - improved ground floor cloakroom facilities in some new properties in Rushden, Irthlingborough and Oundle to enable the properties to be offered to applicants with restricted mobility
o increased the stock of affordable bungalows and ground floor flats in the district insisting that wet rooms are provided in both

- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are a means tested grant to adapt the homes of disabled residents to enable them to live independently or for them to continue living in their home with care. Adaptations range from level access showers to extensions to facilitate a ground floor bedroom and/or bathroom. As can be seen in the pie charts below, it is mostly owner occupiers who benefit from DFGs and the cost of the work is mainly for relatively minor adaptations costing less than £5,000

Cost of Adaptations (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£5,000 or less</td>
<td>8.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£5,001 to £15,000</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£15,001 to £30,000</td>
<td>78.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tenure of DFG Applicants (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner/Occupier</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL Tenant</td>
<td>47.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Tenant</td>
<td>49.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Responded to welfare reforms such as the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy by providing Discretionary Housing Payments while households wait for a suitable smaller property to become available
- Provided funding through the Community Support Grants scheme to Community Law Service to provide debt counselling and money advice to our residents. The grant is currently £50K per annum and is over a three-year period up 31 March 2020
- Whilst the Council is neither an intervention or investigation body in terms of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, we take a proactive approach towards our duty to refer cases to the relevant statutory Safeguarding Boards
- Our Early Help interventions for children and their families help reduce the need for a child or family having to be referred to specialist and costly social care services
- All officers and Members receive awareness training on safeguarding and early help policies and procedures
- Established a Multi-Agency hub arrangement involving all partners to support early help and safeguarding and to reduce crime and disorder
- Case management of Anti-Social Behaviour, domestic abuse and hate crime
- Supported the Health and Wellbeing Locality Forum which links to the county Health and Wellbeing Board. The priorities in our district include the frail and elderly and rural isolation
Housing is now represented on the health sector’s multi agency patient discharge group to identify ways to improve patient discharge procedures and reduce delays in transfer from care especially for housing related issues.

**Future action**

We will

- continue to seek to increase the provision of bungalows and wheelchair accessible properties in the district both for homeowners and those who wish to rent by updating local planning policy, negotiating with developers and partnership working with Registered Providers
- continue to seek to deliver specialist housing with care and support for our increasingly ageing population by taking a more proactive approach to identifying and allocating sites
- work with architects and developers to identify innovative housing designs to meet the desires and expectations of older people and encourage them to downsize
- [continue to seek funding opportunities for projects which provide accommodation and/or otherwise prevent and relieve homelessness](#)
- continue to make best use of available DFG funding and continue to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants to all eligible clients
- continue to make Discretionary Housing Payments available for people who need short term assistance
- continue to support the voluntary sector and community groups to make places safer, healthier and more prosperous
- continue to safeguard children and vulnerable adults so they are protected from harm
- strengthen our use of the powers available to tackle ASB and work more closely with Registered Provider partners to do so
- continue to work with the health sector to improve discharge from hospitals looking at potential problems at the point of admission to ensure lengthy delays in relation to housing issues can be dealt with as quickly as possible.
Section 5 - Monitoring the Strategic Housing Plan

The Strategic Housing Plan is an evolving process and needs to be able to respond to national and local changes in legislation and policy, as well as changing local circumstances. In particular, we will need to closely monitor that our response to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is adequate and fit for purpose.

An Action Plan will track and monitor progress towards meeting our aspirations for housing in the district. This will be a working document which will evolve to respond to and reflect national and local change throughout the 5 year lifetime of this Strategic Housing Plan.
Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality Group</th>
<th>Positive Impact</th>
<th>Negative Impact</th>
<th>Neutral Impact</th>
<th>Explanation and Evidence (e.g. description of elements of the proposal, data held, consultation results, customer feedback)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider Women/Girls, Men/Boys, Transgender individuals</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Single parents (more often women) are less likely to be able to resolve their housing needs through the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider, for instance: Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other sexual orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity:</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider, for instance: • White British people, • White non-British people, • Asian or Asian British people, • Black or Black British people, • Chinese people, • People of mixed heritage, • Travellers (Gypsy/Roma/Irish heritage), • People from any other ethnic groups, • People who do not have English as their first language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment will benefit this protected group by establishing additional need for pitches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability:</strong></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical impairment, e.g. mobility issues which mean using a wheelchair or crutches</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled facilities grants and additional accessible housing will assist people with physical impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory impairment, e.g. blind/having a serious visual impairment, deaf/having a serious hearing impairment</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health condition, e.g. depression or schizophrenia</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People with mental health conditions are more likely to become homeless and less able to resolve their housing needs through the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disability/difficulty, e.g. Down’s syndrome or dyslexia, or cognitive impairment such as autistic spectrum disorder</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist housing with support assists people with learning disabilities to live in the community. People with learning disabilities benefit from additional assistance with housing applications, particularly where internet access is an issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-standing illness or health condition, e.g. cancer, HIV, Diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled facilities grants and additional accessible housing will assist people with long-term health conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health problems or impairments (please specify if appropriate)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage and Civil Partnership:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in a Marriage or Civil Partnership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pregnancy and Maternity:</strong></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>People who have just had a baby or who are pregnant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pregnant women and those with babies are less likely to be able to resolve their housing needs through the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older People (60+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Older people will benefit from proposals to increase the housing with care available. Older people benefit from additional assistance with housing applications, particularly where internet access is an issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Families with children (particularly single parents) may be less able to resolve their housing needs through the market. Young people leaving care and others aged 16-17 will benefit from protocols being put in place to deal with housing issues.

### Religion/Belief:
Consider, for instance:
- Christian
- Hindu
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Buddhist
- any other religion or belief (including holding no belief)

### Other Potentially Affected Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Affected Groups</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Isolation - People who live in rural areas e.g isolated geographically, lack of internet access</td>
<td>People in rural areas can be offered home visits where transport is an issue. Rural exception site developments will assist with affordable housing in rural areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic Exclusion – e.g. people who are on benefits, have low educational attainment, single parents, people living in poor quality housing, people who have poor access to services, the unemployed or any combination of these and the other protected strands</td>
<td>Homeless people and those on the housing register are often socially excluded, unemployed, on benefits, have low educational attainment, may be single parents, living in poor quality housing, have poor access to services. In addition there are often other issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other potentially affected groups <em>(please specify)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children and Young People (see guidance for definition) x

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children and Young People (see guidance for definition)</th>
<th>x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>