

North Norfolk District Council Housing Strategy 2021- 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	1
The Purpose of the Housing Strategy	1
Links to Other Strategies and Policies	1
Structure of the Housing Strategy	1
Developing the Housing Strategy	2
The Corporate Plan	2
Consultation with Stakeholders	2
The Big Issues for North Norfolk.....	3
Increasing the Supply of New Housing.....	3
Housing Stock Condition in the Private Sector	3
Making Better Use of Existing Housing	3
Supporting Vulnerable Residents.....	4
Current Actions Undertaken by the Council to address Housing Issues in North Norfolk ...	4
Actions for the Housing Strategy	5
Theme 1 – Increasing the Supply of Housing.	5
Existing Corporate Plan Objectives and Delivery Plan Actions.....	5
New Actions in the Housing Strategy	5
Theme 2 – Improving Housing Stock Condition in the Private Sector	7
The Corporate Plan Objectives & Delivery Plan Actions.....	7
New actions in the Housing Strategy.....	7
Theme 3 – Making Best Use of Existing Homes	9
The Corporate Plan Objectives and Delivery Plan Actions	9
New Actions in the Housing Strategy	9
Theme 4 – Supporting Vulnerable Residents (to access & sustain suitable housing)	11
The Corporate Plan Objectives & Delivery Plan Actions.....	11
New Actions in the Housing Strategy	11
Appendix 1 - Current Actions Undertaken by the Council to address Housing Issues in North Norfolk	14
Current activity - Increasing the Supply of Housing:.....	14
Current activity - Housing Stock Condition in the Private Sector:.....	14
Current activity - Making Best Use of Existing Homes:	15
Current activity - Supporting Vulnerable Residents (to access and sustain suitable housing):	15
Appendix 2 - Housing in North Norfolk a Summary of Issues 2020	16

Introduction

Background

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities. Local Homes for Local Need is one of the six priorities. The Corporate Plan recognises that access to suitable housing is a problem for many households.

House prices are high relative to local incomes and unaffordable to many households seeking their first home. The lucrative holiday let market often squeezes out tenants in private rent homes. There are too few affordable homes to meet the shortfall in the market.

Much of the existing housing stock has poor energy efficiency and this linked to low incomes results in significant numbers of households facing fuel poverty. With an aging population many older people in the district live in homes which are no longer suitable to their needs.

The Purpose of the Housing Strategy

This Housing Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for housing. It also sets out the actions the Council intends to take to improve housing in the district.

- The Council's Corporate Plan Objectives set out the key priority areas for housing.
- Evidence on housing challenges and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has identified some additional priorities.

The Strategy includes the actions and interventions which the Council, partners and stakeholders will undertake to deliver the key priorities for Housing.

Links to Other Strategies and Policies

The Housing Strategy has links with a wide range of other Council strategies and policies. In preparing the Housing Strategy we consulted with stakeholders, including internal stakeholders. Our aim is to ensure we do not duplicate other strategies and policies and that the Housing Strategy aligns with those strategies and policies.

Other policies and strategies that have links to the Housing Strategy include; the existing and emerging Local Plans, the Environmental Charter and the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy.

Structure of the Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy has two main elements:

1. The process for developing the strategy taking the Corporate Plan as a framework, looking at evidence of housing locally and listening to the views of a wide range of stakeholders.
2. The proposed actions and interventions which the Council working with partners will undertake. We group by these actions by housing theme:
 - Increasing the supply of new housing.
 - Improving housing stock condition in the private sector.
 - Making better use of existing housing.
 - Supporting vulnerable residents.

Developing the Housing Strategy

We have developed the Housing Strategy from:

1. The Council's Corporate Plan Objectives, which provide a 'framework' of priority areas.
2. Analysis of evidence on the housing needs and challenges in the district.
3. Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

In advance of producing a new Housing Strategy we prepared a report – Housing in North Norfolk a Summary of Issues 2020 (attached as Appendix 2 to this strategy). This report provides much of the background data that helped inform the development of the strategy.

The Council already undertakes a wide range of housing activity. This 'business as usual' activity and existing projects do not form part of the strategy. However we do summarise this activity in this report to:

- Reassure stakeholders of action the Council is already taking (and therefore show where it is not necessary to include new action in the Housing Strategy).
- Identify the resources already used to provide housing services and which could, potentially, be re-allocated (if current activity were stopped/reduced) to generate capacity for newer and higher priority Housing Strategy actions.

The Corporate Plan

Housing is a top priority for North Norfolk District Council; delivering Local Homes for Local Need with a focus on high quality in terms of design, environmental sustainability and affordability is one of the six headline aims in the Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Plan provides the framework for the Housing Strategy. We set out the Corporate Plan objectives in our engagement with stakeholders. The ideas for additional actions and interventions identified by stakeholders align with and augment the Corporate Plan objectives.

Consultation with Stakeholders

The housing strategy is divided into four themes and these formed the basis of engagement with stakeholders:

- Increasing the supply of new housing.
- Improving housing stock condition in the private sector.
- Making better use of existing housing.
- Supporting vulnerable residents.

In March and April 2021 we held a series of workshops (one for each theme). In total over 60 stakeholders including, district councillors, town and parish councillors, officers from Housing Associations, Board members from community-led housing groups, private developers and builders, private landlords and representatives from political parties not currently represented at the council attended one or more of the workshops.

Following the series of workshops we prepared an initial draft of the new housing strategy. We circulated this draft to stakeholders for further comment. We also held a further workshop for Councillors and invited comments on the initial draft.

This current Housing Strategy incorporates many of the additional ideas we received from stakeholders and members.

The Big Issues for North Norfolk

These are the headline issues identified from analysis of housing conditions in the district and included in “Housing in North Norfolk a Summary of Issues 2020”. We have grouped these by housing themes.

Increasing the Supply of New Housing

To meet the needs of additional households the Council has a target of 479 new homes per year. In the six years to March 2020 new homes built averaged 469 per year.

The district needs 100 new affordable homes each year. In the six years to March 2020 the average number of new affordable homes was 83. However, right to buy sales and voluntary sales by registered providers reduced the net number of new affordable homes in the six years to March 2019 to an average of 19 - a net deficit of 81 homes per year.

Housing Stock Condition in the Private Sector

By far the most significant issue is excess cold due of poor heating systems/poor insulation.

- 27% of homes in the private sector have a category 1 HHSRS¹ hazard. The largest single problem is excess cold.
- Nearly one in five of tenants in private rented homes face fuel poverty.

There are 55,000 homes in the district, nearly 13,000 have a category 1 HHSRS hazard. Over 5,000 households, nearly 10% of households in the district face fuel poverty.

Private residences are the single biggest generators of carbon-dioxide in the district. Improving heating systems and insulation in the district will help keep homes warm, reduce energy bills, reduce fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions.

Making Better Use of Existing Housing

The District has a problem with ‘Lost’ homes.

- The incidence of second and holiday homes in North Norfolk is the second highest in the country (in 2020 there were 6,697 registered, 11.6% of homes).
- The level of empty homes is relatively low in North Norfolk. Even so this is still a waste of scarce housing (there were 572 empty homes in December 2020 that had been empty for six months or more).
- Some affordable housing is lost each year through sales, both voluntary disposals and right to buy – on average 64 per annum over the last five years.

There is a mismatch between the need for, and supply of, affordable homes. Of the current housing list 1,538 (59%) need a one-bed home but only 105 (46%) of available lets in the last year were one-bed. There are fewer applicants (238) needing a home with four or more bedrooms, but there was only one available for let in the last year.

Registered providers are building significant numbers of shared ownership homes in the district but only 23 applicants on the housing list have expressed an interest in this tenure. However, for many households this could be an affordable solution, with a typical 25% share priced at £70k and average earnings in North Norfolk £23k.

Most affordable homes let go to those in very high need - 82% of homes were let to Band 1 or 2 need applicants. However, on rural exception schemes (where the local allocation policy

¹ The housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) is a risk-based evaluation tool to help identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. The HHSRS Category 1 hazards include excess cold hazards, falls hazards and disrepair.

gives priority to those with local connections), applicants in lower need may have an opportunity for a home as only 23% go to those in the highest bands.

Supporting Vulnerable Residents

The district's population is old and getting older - 33% of the population are aged 65+ (compared to 18% in England) and the average age is 50 (41 in England). The number of older people is predicted to increase 150% by 2041.

There are estimated to be 17,000 households where a person has limiting long term illness / disability in North Norfolk. Many of these households will need adaptations to their home or will need to move as their current home cannot meet their needs. There is shortage in the district of suitable homes for older people who need additional support to live independently. There is also a shortage of homes for households with disabilities who need accessible homes.

Of the 2,825 applicants on the council's housing list, many are in high need (240 in Band 1). Band 1 applicants often have a variety of complex needs indicators such as medical or welfare needs. In the last year 951 households have come to the council as potentially homeless. Again many of those face complex issues such as a history of mental health, abuse or drug and alcohol dependency, face physical health or disability challenges or are potentially vulnerable due to their age, support needs or learning disability.

Current Actions Undertaken by the Council to address Housing Issues in North Norfolk

NNDC, working with a wide range of partners, is already taking action to address many of the housing issues highlighted above. We set out the detail in Appendix 1 of this report.

Actions for the Housing Strategy

In this Housing Strategy we have grouped the actions and interventions by themes:

- Increasing the supply of new housing.
- Improving housing stock condition in the private sector.
- Making better use of existing housing.
- Supporting vulnerable residents.

For each theme we start with the existing Corporate Plan Objectives and Delivery Plan Actions. We follow these additional actions identified from analysis of housing challenges and consultation with stakeholders.

Theme 1 – Increasing the Supply of Housing.

For this Theme the Housing Strategy has three sub-themes each with a number of proposed actions and interventions:

1. Direct delivery.
2. Supporting delivery by others.
3. Supporting new types of development.

Existing Corporate Plan Objectives and Delivery Plan Actions

The existing Corporate Plan already clearly highlights new affordable homes, and access to those homes, as a priority:

Objective 5: Delivering new affordable homes both directly as a Council and through partnership working with Registered Providers.

- Investigate ways to support and assist affordable housing providers, including the potential for a Council loan scheme for Registered Providers to facilitate a supply of affordable homes.

In addition, Objective 1 of the Corporate Plan is the development of a new Local Plan for the district. This new Local Plan will help facilitate the delivery of new homes (market and affordable) in the district. The new Housing Strategy will sit alongside and work in tandem with the emerging local plan.

New Actions in the Housing Strategy

The main focus of this theme of the strategy is increasing the supply of affordable housing. However, some of the actions, such as simplifying and de-risking development, will also help deliver market housing.

This theme has close links with planning policy. We have involved stakeholders including planning officers in developing the strategy proposals to ensure planning policy and housing strategy align. The emerging Local Plan already covers some of the issues around new housing supply e.g. the need for smaller homes and specialist housing provision for disabled or older people, so we have tried not to repeat in this housing strategy.

Direct Delivery by the Council

Using its own resources and with support from government grant the Council has delivered several additional units of temporary housing for homeless households. There is potentially a wider role for the council in directly providing housing, but exactly what that role should be and where the council can have the biggest impact has yet to be clarified.

Actions:

- The Council will clarify what it aims to achieve through direct delivery / a housing company – including delivery of new homes, improvement of existing homes and supporting different tenure options e.g. private rent.
- Consider if it is possible to develop a business case for a housing company which meets the Council's aims and helps meet housing need in the district.

De-risking Development

A strong theme emerging from consultation with stakeholders is that there are barriers to housing development, including affordable housing, due to the planning system and lack of finance. The risk of abortive costs deter Registered Providers and SME builders/developers bringing forward sites.

Actions:

- The Council will consider a range of actions to help de-risk housing development (including affordable housing) and bring back recommendations to implement the most effective. Actions to be considered include:
 - Allocate sites for affordable housing (including reviewing some of the sites not selected as the preferred sites for allocation in the emerging local plan).
 - Achieve outline planning permission on selected sites.
 - Employ a Local Planning Enabler to provide planning support for affordable housing.
 - Provide free pre-application advice for affordable housing developments.
 - Use s106 commuted sums to provide top-up funding for affordable housing for schemes which would otherwise not be viable.
 - Provide loan funding to help Registered Providers deliver affordable housing.
 - Better engage external consultees (including highways, etc.) to understand the context and need for affordable housing development.
 - Work with Homes England to make the case for higher grant rates and/or ability to use grant with cross-subsidy from market homes.
 - Investigate ways we can encourage small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) to provide new housing (and employment) in the district.

Coastal Rollback

To assist owners whose properties are at risk from coastal erosion and to help prevent blight the Council is able to offer owners planning permission for a property elsewhere in the district. However, this involves the co-operation of landowners and property owners to link land with the planning permission. To date very few rollback sites have been developed. It is possible that a more proactive approach by the Council could help deliver sites both for rollback and affordable housing.

- Consider whether providing sites for 'Coastal rollback' linked to affordable housing developments helps deliver both.

Build to Rent

Market rented homes are 'under-represented' in the district and build-to-rent could play an important role in increasing supply, inward investment and driving up standards within the private rented sector.

Actions:

- Look at ways the Council can support the development of good quality rented housing.

Modern Methods of Construction

Modern methods of construction (MMC) bring several potential benefits:

- Reducing development risk.
- Reducing environmental impacts and providing energy efficient homes.
- Reducing costs and delivering more quickly.
- Allowing access to difficult sites e.g. where access for construction traffic would not be possible or would cause disruption to existing residents.

Actions:

- The Council will encourage and support the use of MMC by helping to identify sites, liaison with planning and consultation with Town/Parish Councils and local residents.

Engagement with Local Communities and Other Stakeholders

Support from local communities is important to the successful delivery of affordable housing.

Actions:

- The Council will work with Registered Providers, other developers and landowners to involve local communities in new housing schemes in their areas.
- The Council will work with Neighbourhood Plan groups to help identify sites for affordable housing.

Community Led Housing

Community led housing gives local communities greater involvement and control in delivering affordable housing to meet local needs. Greater local ownership ensures schemes are better integrated into local communities and deliver quality sustainable new homes.

Actions:

- Support existing and 'grow' new community led housing organisation to deliver more affordable homes to meet local need

Theme 2 – Improving Housing Stock Condition in the Private Sector

For this Theme the Housing Strategy has three sub-themes each with a number of proposed actions and interventions:

1. Improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty
2. Tackling disrepair.
3. Tackling empty homes.

The Corporate Plan Objectives & Delivery Plan Actions

The existing Corporate Plan already highlights the condition of existing homes, especially energy efficiency, as a priority:

Objective 2: Developing & implementing a new housing strategy

- Identifying the most effective interventions to improve conditions and energy efficiency in private sector housing.
- Identifying and analysing the condition of private sector housing stock.
- Investigating the viability of methods to help reduce fuel poverty amongst vulnerable local residents.

New actions in the Housing Strategy

Delivering Programmes of Improvement Works

Delivering works to improve heating and insulation is an area with multiple challenges:

- Grant funding is available but is short-term and (seems) difficult to access.
- Promotion of the available funding and support to applicants is unclear.

- Grant processes are often complex and experience has shown that few people who really need the works will access the scheme.
- Contractors lack the capacity and skilled staff to take on extra work at short notice. They are reluctant to do works to single properties preferring the economies of scale of grouped properties. Supporting local contractors will help the local economy and also provide job and training opportunities for younger workers.

Actions:

- The Council and partners to lobby government to secure long-term grant funding for energy efficiency works for both privately owned and privately rented homes.
- The Council will work with Norfolk Warm Homes and other partners to produce a clear 'offer' for low income households (and landlords) to improve energy efficiency. This offer will include support from initial enquiry to final installation - to 'hand hold' through process. This will include the council employing a dedicated energy efficiency officer.
- The Council and Norfolk Warm Homes will actively promote energy efficiency measures. Promotion will be direct to residents and through intermediaries such as landlords, and parish and town councils.
- Working with Norfolk Warm Homes and other partners the Council will consider an accreditation scheme for contractors to help ensure capacity to deliver energy efficiency and to promote local employment.
- The Council will consider whether direct provision or guaranteeing work for contractors will help ensure contractors are available to carry out work.

Fuel Poverty

Nearly 10% of households in the district face fuel poverty. The problems are most acute in the private rented sector and in parts of the owner occupied sector.

Actions:

- The Council will work with landlords and the Eastern Landlords association to encourage landlord take up of energy efficiency improvement works.
- The Council will use the Building Research Establishment Stock Condition Database² to target properties for energy efficiency improvement works.

Older Properties and Listed Buildings

The District has a high proportion of older properties and listed buildings. These properties have design features and use materials which make improvements to energy efficiency difficult. In addition planning policies prevent implementation of some type of energy efficiency works on listed buildings.

Action:

- The Council will work with the district's country estates, other private landlords and owners to identify examples of good practice for making energy efficiency improvements to older/listed buildings. The Council will share and promote the good practice identified.

Empty Homes

By comparison with England as a whole North Norfolk District has relatively few empty homes that have been empty for more than two years. However, the relatively few long-term empty homes are often in poor condition, unattractive, potentially dangerous and are a waste of scarce housing.

² This database uses income and stock condition data to identify fuel poor households.

Action:

- The Council will carry out research to identify examples of good practice (use of legislation, grants and other incentives) to reduce the number of long-term empty homes. The Council will consider adopting good practice measures where these bring benefits which justify the costs of the interventions.

Disrepair

Some owner-occupiers lack the financial resources or capability to adequately maintain their homes. Poor condition homes are likely to have an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of the occupiers and potentially on the wider neighbourhood.

Action:

- The Council will carry out research to identify examples of good practice (use of legislation, grants and other incentives) to tackle homes in disrepair. The Council will consider adopting good practice measures where these bring benefits which justify the costs of the interventions.

Theme 3 – Making Best Use of Existing Homes

For this Theme the Housing Strategy has four sub-themes each with a number of proposed actions and interventions:

1. Managing the loss of affordable homes.
2. Supporting access to home ownership.
3. Allocating affordable homes fairly.
4. Accessing alternative housing options.

The Corporate Plan Objectives and Delivery Plan Actions

The existing Corporate Plan already highlights the issue with 'lost' affordable homes:

Objective 3: Develop a business case for a housing company with a view to providing the Council with a way of addressing some of the housing needs in the district

- Explore whether the District Council should consider the acquisition of older Victory Housing Trust (Flagship) properties in rural locations and then upgrade and make available for market rent.

Objective 5: Delivering new affordable homes both directly as a Council and through partnership working with Registered Providers.

- Explore ways to help households into owner-occupation, including consideration of mortgage facilitation schemes; lending to allow people to buy their own home, meaning that more local people can remain in the communities they call home

New Actions in the Housing Strategy

Lost/underused homes

The level of second and holiday homes, and the knock-on impact on the availability and affordability of homes for local households, is a major issue in North Norfolk. Whilst this may be a national policy issue, many actions in this strategy, particularly those related to new supply will help mitigate the impact of second and holiday homes. Compared with England as a whole North Norfolk District has relatively few long-term empty homes and these are covered in the previous theme of the strategy. Whilst the number of affordable homes 'lost' through voluntary disposals and right to buy sales are falling, seeking alternative options for the voluntary disposals remains an important part of retaining affordable homes.

Actions:

- The Council will work with Flagship to review all proposed disposals and consider alternative options (including NNDC purchase).

Access to Owner Occupation

Access to owner occupation in North Norfolk is difficult because of high prices relative to incomes.

Actions:

- Support government initiatives that help access owner occupation - provided these are not at the expense of affordable housing.

Low Cost Home Ownership

Low cost home ownership is currently not well understood or exploited to meet housing need but is likely to continue to be a significant part of delivery of new affordable homes. The actions proposed aim to make better use of this tenure.

Actions:

- The council will work with partners to raise awareness and understanding of shared ownership and other low cost home ownership homes.
- The council will research current mortgage availability and consider whether the council itself should become a mortgage lender for shared ownership and other low cost home ownership homes if there is a significant gap in availability.
- The Council will ensure that, through appropriate housing policies and policy in the emerging Local Plan, the government's new low cost home ownership product First Homes is implanted effectively – to deliver locally affordable home ownership options

Allocating Affordable homes

Understanding future demands for affordable housing and how current allocations benefit (or exclude) households is key to making best use of a very scarce housing resource. Identifying future demands will also identify gaps in existing provision and help shape future new homes delivery programmes.

Actions:

- The council will undertake analysis to understand housing needs and review the effectiveness of the current allocations system (specifically looking at local lets and at priority for move on).

House share

House sharing could be an affordable solution for some households and may also be a way to help older residents who are under-occupying and facing isolation and loneliness.

Actions:

- The council will work with partner Registered Providers to consider use of existing larger homes for shared housing / building new shared housing schemes.
- The council will investigate promotion of a scheme to facilitate multigenerational living.

Accessing private rented homes

Private renting is an important part of a thriving housing market but is a relatively small sector in the district.

Actions:

- The council will consider how it or partner Registered Providers could expand the private rented sector, including options to:
 - Establish a private sector leasing scheme (leasing homes from landlords providing greater security of income to the landlord and a guaranteed supply of homes to the council).
 - Provide support to private landlords by advertising their homes/finding prospective tenants.
 - Work with the Eastern Landlords Association to provide better support and information to existing and prospective landlords.

Theme 4 – Supporting Vulnerable Residents (to access & sustain suitable housing)

For this Theme the Housing Strategy has two sub-themes each with a number of proposed actions and interventions:

1. Prevention of Homelessness and Help for those who are Homeless.
2. Provision of Specialist Housing – New and Adapted

The Corporate Plan Objectives & Delivery Plan Actions

The existing Corporate Plan already includes priorities relating to vulnerable residents:

Objective 4: Developing & implementing a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan.

Objective 6: Working with partners to deliver 500 units of Housing with Care/Extra Care.

New Actions in the Housing Strategy

Prevention of Crisis

Many people who become homeless or face acute housing need have previously interacted with other public services. These public services may have been aware of warning signs of the risk of homelessness. The impact of homelessness is major and preventing crisis is far more effective and beneficial than tackling homelessness once it has happened.

Actions:

- The Council will use the opportunity of bringing people related services together (following a recent review) to better identify people at risk and to work collaboratively in a cross-service way to provide people-centred services and deliver better outcomes for potentially vulnerable residents.

Homeless

Homelessness is a major trauma in someone's life and is likely to have a significant impact on their life chances. Working together with other organisations can deliver more effective services to prevent and tackle homelessness.

Actions:

- The Council will continue to deliver actions in the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- The Council will deliver four units of move on accommodation for rough sleepers and explore options to provide better forms of temporary accommodation, including further direct delivery of temporary housing.

- The Council will ensure it has effective processes and resources in place to manage a portfolio of temporary accommodation
- The Council will play an active part in the Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership project to end homelessness in Norfolk and will help deliver the emerging action plan from this project.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 brings in new duties for local authorities and requires the upper tier authority (Norfolk County Council) to assess the need for safe accommodation (refuge or other accommodation with security features) for those fleeing domestic abuse, and the need for support for those housed in safe accommodation; and to develop a strategy to meet the identified need.

- The council has a statutory duty to cooperate with Norfolk County Council in carrying out these requirements and will assist by providing needs data to support the needs assessment and will work with all relevant partners to develop a strategy which will inform commissioning decisions for the delivery of new provision.

Appropriate homes for older or disabled people and Supported Housing

Safe, secure, warm and accessible housing can make a huge difference to the quality of life and health of older or disabled people and there is a significant shortage of these homes in the district. There are also other gaps in specialist supported housing in the district.

Actions:

- The Council will continue to work with partners to deliver 500 Housing with Care Homes – through helping with site identification, the planning process and funding of schemes.
- The Council will ensure that new homes meet the needs of older and disabled households by ensuring policies in the new local plan provide sufficient new suitable homes.
- The Council will work with RP partners to ensure that new affordable homes meet the needs of older and disabled local residents.
- The Council will work with partners including Norfolk County Council to support the delivery of specialist housing schemes making use of both Homes England and other sources of grant funding.
- The council will carry out a review of the use of Disabled Facilities Grants to ensure the funding has the biggest possible impact on helping people with disabilities to have a home suited to their needs. For example, this could include using DFG funding to improve accessibility standards of new or existing affordable homes.

Conclusion

The housing needs of the district are substantial. To meet these needs the district will actively engage and work with a wide range of partners to: help increase the supply of new quality homes to meet local needs; to improve the condition of existing housing to provide warm, secure, affordable homes; to make the best use of scarce existing affordable homes; and, importantly, as the strategy is not just about 'bricks and mortar, help meet the needs of all our households to ensure they can access and sustain a home.

The Action Plan sets out the actions the Council will undertake to deliver against these ambitious aims.

Appendix 1 - Current Actions Undertaken by the Council to address Housing Issues in North Norfolk

Current activity - Increasing the Supply of Housing:

1. Local Plan Policies – the current (and emerging) Local Plan contains clear policies to set a framework to deliver the right types of homes in the right locations across North Norfolk. This includes:
 - a) The size mix of homes to deliver the smaller homes needed in the district.
 - b) Requiring suitable homes for older and disabled residents.
 - c) Supporting the delivery of affordable homes by setting clear requirements for the proportion of affordable homes provided as part of market development.
 - d) Policies to enable rural exception housing schemes and community led housing.

An independent consultant undertakes viability reviews to ensure the Council maximise the number of affordable homes delivered. Section 106 agreements ensure the Council secure affordable homes in perpetuity.
2. A dedicated Enabling Officer – who works with parish council and local communities to build understanding of the local need for affordable homes, and carries out site searches and liaises with landowners and RPs to identify and progress suitable sites.
3. Support to Community-led housing - a specific element of the enabling role is supporting the growth of community-led housing in the district, including using Community Housing Fund to support groups and schemes with grant.
4. Financial support – NNDC uses section 106 monies to provide grants to increase affordable housing and has also provided loans to RPs to help them deliver more homes in the district.
5. The Council has undertaken a review of existing council assets/land to identify sites suitable to provide housing.

Current activity - Housing Stock Condition in the Private Sector:

1. Enforcement – the council's current intervention in private sector housing focuses on statutory powers:
 - a) Licencing relevant Homes in Multiple Occupation
 - b) Action to tackle private rented homes failing to meet minimum standards.
 - c) 'Nuisance' properties (dangerous structures, serious disrepair and pests) causing issues to wider communities.
2. Empty homes – the main tool NNDC currently uses to reduce the number of empty homes is Council Tax; where empty homes are regularly monitored and premiums are applied to 'tax' long-term empty homes.
3. Improve energy efficiency – as well as tackling excessively cold private rented homes NNDC provides information on existing energy efficiency grant schemes and sign posts customers to Norfolk Warm Homes, the council also provides information on community energy supplier switching.

Current activity - Making Best Use of Existing Homes:

1. Common Housing List – the Council, on behalf of all social landlords across the district operates a common housing list (meaning applicants only need to apply once).
2. Choice based lettings system – the Council advertise properties available to let on behalf of Registered Provider landlords across the district. Bids made by applicants for a home are priorities using a common priority banding system to ensure homes go to those in the highest need, or in the case of Exception Housing Schemes, to those with the strongest local connection
3. Second & Holiday Homes – the Council monitors and provides regular reports on the levels of Second and Holiday homes across the district. The information is shared with parishes and used to target the highest concentration areas for new affordable housing.
4. Analyse Need – the Council analyses information from its Housing List to identify gaps in existing affordable supply and uses this information to provide information to developers and Registered Providers to help address those gaps.
5. Affordable housing stock disposals - the Council has an ongoing dialogue with the Flagship Housing Group and has agreed actions to mitigate the impact of stock disposals e.g. facilitating the purchase of disposals by other landlords, encouraging sale to shared owners and most recently direct purchase by the Council.

Current activity - Supporting Vulnerable Residents (to access and sustain suitable housing):

1. Extra Care Housing – the Council works with developers and Registered Providers to understand local need, identify suitable sites, achieve successful Planning permission and deliver good quality extra care housing - most recently a 66 flat scheme at Meadow Walk in Fakenham.
2. Adaptations – the council has a dedicated team including NNDC and NCC staff (Occupational Therapists) who assess need, recommend appropriate adaptations, provide grants and organise adaptations to enable residents to remain in their homes. The annual budget for this is £1.3m.
3. Homelessness prevention and relief – the Housing Options team work with households in need to prevent, wherever possible, homelessness occurring – this involves negotiating with landlords and families and accessing additional funds to prevent crisis. Support is provided to those facing homelessness, including dedicated posts to support rough sleepers and those with more complex needs.
4. Support – the Early Help Hub brings together a wide range of service providers to provide advice, support and assistance to residents of all ages to enable them to live independently and address their needs to improve their wellbeing. The service includes Living Well officers who work directly with households to access services to improve wellbeing.
5. Provision of temporary housing – the Council provides temporary accommodation for homeless households whilst their needs are assessed and ahead of securing more permanent homes. Some of this accommodation is purchased from the private sector but the council also provides self-contained homes itself to provide better quality housing.

Appendix 2 - Housing in North Norfolk a Summary of Issues 2020

In advance of producing a new Housing Strategy we prepared a report – Housing in North Norfolk a Summary of Issues 2020. This report, included in this appendix, provides much of the background data that helped inform the development of the strategy

