North Norfolk Housing Strategy 2016-2020
(Intentionally blank)
Foreword

Housing is important. It is more than bricks and mortar or timber. Poor housing can impact on the health, aspiration and life chances of the occupiers, this is particularly so for the very young and elderly. The quality, cost and availability of housing also has wider impacts on communities and whether businesses can recruit or retain the staff they need.

The Housing Strategy for 2016-20 sets out the Council's priorities for housing and the actions and interventions which the Council working alone and, where appropriate, with its partners and stakeholders will undertake in order to achieve the objective that both new housing and existing housing provision across the district supports thriving residents, communities and businesses.

Introduction

The important role of housing is recognised through the Council’s Corporate Plan 2015-2019 which looks to:

- Support the delivery of new homes across the district.
- Encourage the delivery of affordable homes and in particular Exception Housing Schemes which provide local affordable housing for local people.
- Identify the need and demand for housing, including special needs through specialist housing need surveys.
- Use available powers to reduce the number of long term empty homes across the district.

Ensuring there are the right types and tenures of housing in the right locations will contribute to the Council's wider growth agenda by ensuring that employers are able to attract new employees allowing new businesses to form and existing businesses to grow. New housing supply must fill the gaps in the existing supply of housing to ensure a range of size, types and tenures of housing is available to meet the needs and aspirations of all types of households such as newly forming households, families, the retired and households with a disability or long term limiting illness. By ensuring that new housing supply compliments the existing supply, the current and future needs of the district’s residents (whether existing or those migrating for work or retirement) will be met.

This strategy complements the Housing Allocations Scheme, Homelessness Strategy, Empty Homes Policy, Enforcement Policy and Tenancy Strategy. It is supported by the Housing Strategy Background Paper which provides more information on the issues identified in this strategy.

The strategy is split into two sections:

- New Housing
- Existing Housing and meeting housing related needs

In addition there is a separate Action Plan which details how the actions and interventions identified in the strategy will be delivered.
New Housing

The Council's priorities for new housing are to:

- Deliver more new homes across the district
- Ensure that new homes are of the right size, type and tenure to meet the needs of current and future occupiers
- Ensure that new homes support the economic needs of the district.

What we know about the need for new housing

Across the district there are long standing issues of a lack of affordability of housing caused by:

- A predominance in the existing housing supply of large and detached houses and bungalows which are more expensive to buy or rent
- A lack of smaller homes and flats which provide a cheaper entry point to the market
- The attractiveness of the district causing high demand for housing for second and holiday homes and as a retirement destination
- A high ratio of average house prices to average incomes
- Limited supply of affordable housing including affordable housing for sale.

In addition the supply of existing housing is not sufficient to:

- Meet the needs of the growing population
- Ensure the economic prosperity of the district by ensuring that there is sufficient housing in the right locations at the right price
- Meet the current and future needs of the district as there is a lack of housing suitable for older people to downsize into or to meet the needs of those with long term limiting illnesses or disabilities
- Meet the needs of all households who need affordable housing, including those with the most urgent housing needs and those with local housing needs.

We will deliver the Council's priorities for new homes working alone and, where appropriate, with partners and stakeholders by:

Ensuring new housing is delivered in a timely way

The delivery of new homes requires that planning applications are considered and processed efficiently and effectively so that the timescale from application to decision is as short as possible. Where planning permission is granted, it is important that permissions are not banked and residential planning consents are converted into a start on site, and more importantly completions as quickly as possible.

To achieve this we will:

- Continue to review and improve as required the planning application processes
- Monitor the number of sites with planning permission which have not yet started on site
• Keep planning policies under review and where required reflect changes in the market which impact on developers’ and builders’ ability to build out sites with permissions.
• Ensure the Council has an up to date Local Plan.

Ensuring a sufficient supply of land is available
It is important that the Council maintains an adequate supply of land to meet the need for new homes in appropriate locations and that the needs of self-build and custom builders can be met. In addition planning policies should address the need for affordable housing to meet local housing needs to allow land which is not formally allocated for housing to come forward to meet this need.

To achieve this we will:
• Maintain a minimum five year land supply for new homes
• Allocate new housing sites as required
• Maintain a specific planning policy to enable the provision of affordable housing to meet the local housing need of parishes
• Respond to the needs identified through the self-build and custom build register.

Ensuring the right sizes, types and tenures of housing are provided
The Council will work with developers, builders and Registered Providers to ensure that the right sizes, types and tenures of housing are provided across the district to balance the existing supply of housing and ensure that the current and future needs of the district can be met.

To achieve this we will:
• Keep information on the need for housing, including the need for affordable housing and specialised and supported housing up to date
• Ensure that the Local Plan contains specific policies to require that new housing supply contributes to meeting these needs
• Require the provision of the viable amount of affordable housing on eligible market sites
• Ensure that a range of affordable housing is provided to meet the need for rented affordable housing and affordable housing for sale
• Respond to the requirements of legislation and planning policy guidance in relation to new housing provision.

Supporting Housing Delivery
The Council will work with communities and Parish and Town Councils to support the delivery of new homes and will, where appropriate, directly support the delivery of new homes across the district.

To achieve this we will:
• Maintain a programme of exception housing schemes across the district to meet local housing need
• Respond to changes in funding for the provision of affordable housing and maximise the provision of new affordable housing including homes for rent, for affordable sale and supported housing
Consider how the Property Investment Strategy and Local Investment Strategy can support the delivery of new homes of all tenures.

**Existing Housing and meeting housing related needs**

The Council’s priorities for existing housing and meeting housing related needs are to:

- Make the most effective use of the existing housing stock
- Ensure that existing housing is fit for purpose and contributes to the health and wellbeing of its occupiers
- Ensure a range of support is available for those that require it
- Reduce the number of long term empty homes.

**What we know about existing housing and meeting housing related needs**

Each year, the total number of new homes provided in the district is equivalent to one percent of the existing housing stock. On this basis, the majority of new and existing residents will have to meet their housing need and aspirations by occupying an existing dwelling. It is imperative therefore, that the existing stock is used effectively and is fit for purpose.

The context is:

- In 2015/16 the Council accepted a full housing duty to secure accommodation for 93 homeless households
- In 2015/16, 337 households were housed from the housing list, in 2014/15 447 households were housed, representing a reduction of 110 households who were able to be housed in affordable housing
- There were 2297 applicants on the Council’s housing list at 1 July 2016 who require affordable housing of which 263 were on the Housing Register as they had the most urgent housing needs and 412 were on the Transfer Register
- The Council approved 111 Disabled Facility Grant applications in 2015/16 and 36 Disabled Facility Grant applications between 1 April and 30 June 2016
- 79 Disabled Facility Grants were completed in 2015/16 with a further 28 grants completed by the end of June 2016
- The Council received a 60% increase in the funding received from Government for Disabled Facilities Grant in 2016/17 as part of the commitment from Government to increase funding each year until 2020. The funding is channelled through the Better Care Fund and it is expected that this funding will increasingly be used to meet health priorities. A Locality Plan for spending this money has been developed jointly with the North Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 116 complaints were received in 2015/16 about the condition of private rented dwellings of which 4 resulted in a formal notice being served
- In June 2016, 601 dwellings had been empty for six months or more, of which 114 had been empty for at least two years
- 70.1% of all dwellings are owner occupied, 13.2% are affordable housing and 14.4% are private rented housing
There is a lack of supported housing to maintain independence particularly housing with care to meet the current and future needs of older people with care and support needs.

There is a shortfall in residential and nursing care to meet current and future needs.

We will deliver the Council’s priorities for existing housing and meeting housing related needs working alone and, where appropriate, with partners and stakeholders by:

**Ensuring that the existing supply of affordable housing is used in the most effective way to meet housing needs:**

Many households are unable to meet their housing needs in the market and rely on affordable housing provided by Registered Providers to meet their housing need. As the existing supply is constrained and is reliant on new supply to maintain existing numbers due to the impact of the Preserved Right to Buy, disposals and forthcoming Voluntary Right to Buy extending this right to tenants of Registered Providers; it is imperative that the existing supply is managed effectively to enable the changing needs of existing tenants and needs of applicants on the housing list to be met.

Former Council homes which were sold by the Council through the Right to Buy in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and from February 1982 in rural areas until the Council disposed of its stock in February 2006 are subject to the Section 157 restriction which requires the dwelling to be sold to a purchaser who has lived and/or worked in Norfolk for the three immediately preceding years. These dwellings contribute to the overall supply of affordable housing by providing a pool of cheaper properties for households with connections to Norfolk. The restriction is also imposed on Victory Housing Trust properties in rural areas which are sold to the tenant through the Preserved Right to Buy.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that new and existing affordable housing meets the needs of existing tenants, applicants, Registered Providers and the Council
- Explore how the private rented sector can contribute to meeting housing need
- Ensure that the initial and subsequent sales of shared ownership and other affordable housing for sale products are targeted effectively
- Continue to uphold Section 157 restrictions on former Council properties sold through the Right to Buy
- Maintain an adequate supply of self-contained and emergency temporary accommodation for homeless households
- Monitor the impact of disposals and the Preserved and Voluntary Right to Buy.

**Support initiatives and interventions which enable residents to live independently in their home**

Some residents need support to enable them to manage their home and appropriate support can be provided for a short time in their existing home or by the provision of specialist and/or supported housing where the need for support is longer term. For some residents, their home is not fit for purpose and prevents them from being
independent, in such cases adaptations to the property are required to regain independence.

To achieve this we will:
- Ensure that the Disabled Facilities Grant service operates efficiently and effectively to minimise the timescale between initial application and completion of works and provide more advice and assistance to those households who are not eligible for a grant
- Work with providers of supported housing to ensure that residents who no longer require the service can be moved on quickly
- Continue to engage with and develop the North Norfolk Early Help Hub 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
- Work with Norfolk County Council and other funders to support the provision of new and existing supported housing and ensure the effective use of such provision to meet identified needs.

**Ensure that the existing supply of housing is of good quality**

Poor quality housing is well known to have a negative impact on health, however, poor housing also impacts on the aspiration of the occupiers of such housing and it is therefore important that all housing across the district is in good repair and is warm, dry and safe for the occupiers. In addition it is important that long term empty homes do not cause problems for neighbouring properties or residents.

To achieve this we will:
- Take appropriate enforcement action against all housing identified as having a Category 1 hazard as determined by the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System and consider appropriate action where there are multiple Category 2 hazards
- Ensure that all licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) are licensed and meet the required standards. Provide advice in relation to non-licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure they are of an appropriate standard
- Explore ways to prevent blight as a result of coastal erosion
- Provide advice to owners of long term empty homes and take appropriate action where owners fail to bring them back into use and/or they are a blight on neighbouring properties or the local area
- Signpost residents at risk of or affected by fuel poverty to appropriate support and initiatives.

**Conclusion**

The housing needs of the district can only be met by ensuring that existing housing meets the needs of occupiers, new and existing affordable housing is used in the most effective ways and by ensuring that long term empty homes are brought into use. However, new housing is also needed to balance the existing supply of housing and meet the changing requirements of residents as well as to meet the needs of a growing and aging population. The Action Plan sets out the actions the Council will undertake in order to ensure that new housing and existing housing provision across the district supports thriving residents, communities and businesses.
Monitoring and review

Whilst the period of this Housing Strategy is 2016 to 2020, the strategy will be kept under ongoing review to ensure it remains relevant and up to date.