

Housing Strategy 2021-2026

Contents

Introduction	3
About North West Leicestershire	3
Links to Wider Council Objectives.....	3
Progress since the last strategy	4
Understanding Information	4
Demand.....	5
Housing Register	5
Homelessness.....	6
Demand for Low Cost Home Ownership	7
Housing Need Modelling.....	8
Specialist Housing Need.....	9
Supply.....	10
Current Housing Market	10
The Private Rented Sector	10
Social Sector.....	11
Delivery of New Homes	12
Affordability	14
Owner Occupation	15
Affordability in the Private Rented Sector	16
Affordability in the Social Sector.....	17
Issues Identified During Consultation.....	17
Patterns of Development.....	18
Constraints to Development.....	19
Peoples Changing Housing Needs.....	19
Structural Changes	19
Electric Vehicles	20
Clean Energy	20
Connectivity	20
Demographic Changes	20
Identifying the most effective way to meet changing needs	21

The Housing White Paper	21
Areas for Action	21
Developing a better understanding of need.....	22
Encourage more flexible Homes	22
Futureproofing investment.....	23
Rebalancing supply	23

DRAFT

Introduction

On average people move 8 times in their lifetimes with 3 or 4 of these moves occurring between the ages of 18 and 30. Furthermore research has found the number of moves reducing since the 1970s despite the assumption the population is more mobile. Therefore it is important that we consider how we can meet changing housing needs within existing homes as for a range of reasons relying on a move to address housing difficulties will not be an appropriate solution.

Newbuild only accounts for around a 1% increase in housing stock in a given year and so over the life of this strategy is likely to only account for a little over 5% of the housing stock in the district. New build brings the added advantages of being able to be designed to fit the need at the time, however the existing stock forms by far and beyond the volume. As a result to ensure our housing continues to meet our communities needs we will have to focus at least as much on our existing stock as the opportunity new development brings.

Therefore when considering how we meet the housing needs of the district we need to focus

- Firstly on meeting need within existing homes wherever possible
- Secondly on making the best of use existing stock
- Thirdly on using newbuild to balance the housing market

This strategy sets the priorities and ambitions for the next five years. It sets context for the local plan which will ultimately set out our development policies in the years ahead, whilst considering a more holistic approach to housing need and how best to meet that.

Whilst we cannot under estimate the impact Covid has had on housing from a range of perspectives equally we need to ensure that this does not become a Covid Housing Strategy and we endeavour to understand those issues and changes to the housing market that are likely to be short term and reactive as opposed to those that may be the start of longer term structural changes.

Whilst many will hope that the homes utilisation as a class room was a short term solution to an immediate problem, more people will now be considering the opportunities and flexibility that working from home affords.

About North West Leicestershire

North West Leicestershire boasts enormous diversity including heritage and history, amazing places to visit like Donington Race Circuit, miles of hidden nature trails and days out to delight everyone.

The main business centres are Measham and Ibstock in the south of the area, Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville in the centre of the region and Castle Donington and Kegworth to the North in addition to many businesses to be found throughout the more rural parts.

The region has an excellent transport network with both the M1 & M42 allowing swift access to all parts of the country. This, allied to the rail link at East Midlands Parkway and East Midlands Airport providing national and international services to major European & Transatlantic business destinations - North West Leicestershire is perfectly placed to drive business success and growth further.

Links to Wider Council Objectives

The Council vision is that: "North West Leicestershire will be a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home"

The Council's Delivery Plan identifies five key priorities,

- Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant family-friendly town
- Our communities are safe, healthy, and connected
- Local people live in high quality, affordable homes
- Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs
- Developing a clean green district

This vision and these priorities underpin the ambitions of this strategy and wherever possible wider objectives will support these key priorities even when not directly delivering them.

Progress since the last strategy

The 2016 Housing Strategy identified three key themes, Supply, Standards and Support.

Within that these three themes a number of Aim's were developed namely:

- Maintain and Increase the supply of good quality new homes
- Vacant sites and empty homes
- Improve the quality of affordable housing stock
- Improve standards in private sector
- Work with partners from health and social care to implement housing related areas of Care Act 2014 guidance
- Reduce Excess winter deaths
- Prevent homelessness
- Create sustainable and inclusive communities where people want to live

Whilst there have been some significant challenges since the strategy was developed there have been some significant successes over that time.

The Council delivered on its ambition to be a developer of new affordable housing completing a number of newbuild developments.

We have also worked with partners to develop a new affordable housing scheme on a site previously occupied by an empty sheltered scheme in Ibstock providing 13 new affordable homes, all for rent to people off the Council's housing register.

Plans are also underway for the Council to directly develop on two additional former sheltered schemes, one in Measham and one in Moira.

Since the last Housing Strategy the Council have fully implemented the Homeless Reduction Act placing a far greater emphasis on homeless prevention.

To support the Care Act we have introduced closer working with LCC Occupational Therapist (OT) team, made amendments to the Aids and Adaptations Policy to enable tenants to request some alterations to their home direct without the need for an OT assessment and we have broadened the range of adaptations to properties enabling people to live independently for longer in their home.

Understanding Information

The Council is perhaps uniquely placed in terms of the amount of data it generates, holds and can access to understand housing needs, wants and pressures at a local level. However there is a risk

that we find ourselves data rich and knowledge poor. A key task then is to use our wealth of data to identify key information and trends to inform our decision making.

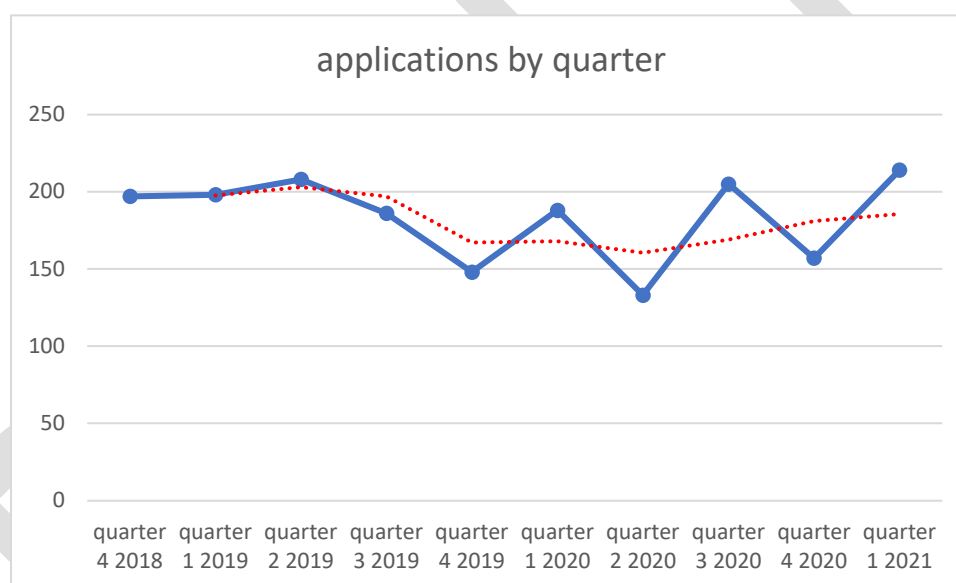
Demand

Housing Register

The housing register is possibly the most comprehensive data set the Council holds in terms of demand for housing assistance and whilst it cannot be seen as a substitute for a housing need model capturing only historic and current information it does provide rich evidence both in terms of changes in demand but also in terms of the detail as to why people are currently in housing difficulties.

Whilst overall numbers on the register are subject to a range of factors, new applications over any time period where eligibility and qualification remain broadly the same provides a reasonable indicator of changing demand.

The graph below shows the number of housing applications which were ultimately accepted by quarter covering the period October – December 2018 through to January to March 2021.



There is a significant level of fluctuation over time but the trend illustrated by the broken red line indicates a slight increase over the last three quarters suggesting demand is rising.

As well as overall demand the register allows us to understand the type of properties needed. The table below shows applications by type of property required. As can be seen over half of those on the register require a one bedroom property (although they may desire something larger) and less than 3% of applicants required a property with 4 bedrooms or more.

Bedroom Need	Households
1	50.64%
2	36.72%
3	9.72%
4	2.58%
5	0.26%

At the 1st August 2021 there were 1,163 households on the housing register. Each is assigned a category to reflect their prevailing housing situation. The table below sets out the number of applicants in each of the top 5 categories.

Category	No.
Insecure Accommodation	228
Assured Shorthold Tenancy- adequately housed	184
Multiple Needs	105
Transfer- adequately housed	105
Medical/Mobility Need	102

Applicants in the Insecure Accommodation category will include those lodging with family and friends as well as those who have been asked to leave more settled accommodation. Those with multiple needs will have been assessed as having a need to move for more than one reason such as being overcrowded and having a medical need to move. Around a quarter of the applicants on the register are currently assessed as adequately housed in their current accommodation, suggesting the register captures aspiration rather than absolute need.

The register also assigns an application type to reflect whether a household has support needs or not. The table below shows the number of applicants assessed as having support needs. Those who are registered for sheltered housing will often be older owner occupiers who need specialist older persons accommodation that they cannot access in the market, either as a result of availability of affordability.

Application Type	No.
General Needs	972
Supported	204
Sheltered	48

Support is currently provided in traditional sheltered corridor schemes for older people, over 60 for council properties although some Registered Providers use a lower age criteria, and a number of designated supported properties currently fitted with hard wire lifelines.

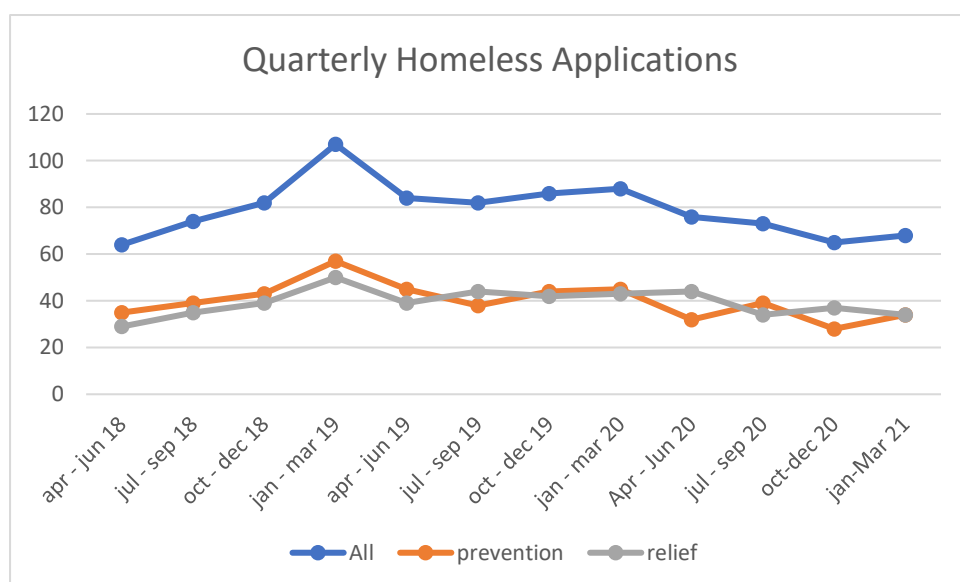
Housing applications are also assessed in terms of mobility needs. The table below shows the breakdown of applications by mobility category.

Category	No.
General Needs	837
Single Level Required	262
Wheelchair accessible	15

Homelessness

An data set that is a better indicator of need are the homelessness records. Furthermore because of a relatively standard application of the legislation and a national statutory reporting requirement it is possible to compare demand quite effectively.

The graph below shows the number of homeless decisions made quarterly since June 2018 which coincided with the introduction of the new Homelessness regime. It shows that whilst there was a noticeable rise in the first year of the Homelessness Reduction Act there has been a modest but ongoing reduction in people being accepted as homeless since the peak in the first quarter of 2019. Furthermore throughout the period the number of cases assisted pre-homeless, at prevention stage and post homelessness, relief stage have remained broadly equal suggesting no significant shift in the nature of approaches as the new system bedded in.



When we compare North West Leicestershire's most recent figures (January to March 2021) we can see that compared to national and regional figures our levels of homelessness are low.

	Households assessed as threatened with homelessness per (000s)	Households assessed as homeless per (000s)
England	1.33	1.55
London	1.55	1.70
Rest of England	1.29	1.53
East Midlands	1.03	1.10
North West Leicestershire	0.75	0.75

Demand for Low Cost Home Ownership

Whilst the current government focus is on encouraging households into home ownership there is limited data available about current demand for subsidised market products and even less information about consumer preferences given the range of products available.

Given the range of products and routes into home ownership there is no single register of interest with consumers free to, and indeed needing to approach a range of different providers for different

products, although the Government appointed Help to Buy Agents do provide a co-ordinating role for Government funded shared ownership.

The Council is therefore currently reliant on modelling approaches to understand demand for these products. Given recent national planning policy changes have increased the level of LCHO likely to be delivered as well as introducing a new model tenure through First Homes as well as changes to the existing shared ownership product it will be increasingly important that we understand overall need for and comparative demand for the varying products available.

It is also worth noting that there are parts of the district with comparatively low value market stock which provide direct competition to new Low Cost Home Ownership products which will attract a new homes premium.

Housing Need Modelling

Although homelessness and waiting list data provides useful information in relation to current and past demand and trends it cannot be used as a proxy for future need. To understand future demand a more sophisticated approach is required and housing need models have been developed and refined over time to account for demographic alongside market change.

The most up to date modelling of housing need, to be met through new supply is the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) published in January 2017.

This identified an overall need for 481 additional homes per annum of which 199 should be affordable homes between the period 2011 and 2031 in North West Leicestershire.

The 199 homes figure was a combined need for rent and low cost home ownership (intermediate) products. The study identified that the need for affordable housing should be split between 20% of those in need requiring intermediate products and 80% rented.

The income required to access intermediate products within North West Leicestershire was calculated to be £20,828

The HEDNA also makes recommendations as to the unit sizes that are required for both Market and Affordable housing.

Type of Housing	Dwelling size			
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Market (HEDNA)	0-10%	30-40%	45-55%	10-20%
Affordable (HEDNA)	30-35%	35-40%	25-30%	5-10%

Although a comparative figure was not included in the HEDNA the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) a similar study in terms of its housing needs modelling, identified that 79% of the need for 1 bedroom affordable homes in North West Leicestershire were generated by an ageing population. This is an important factor to note as it has a significant impact on how this housing need can best be met with units types and facilities needing to reflect the likely occupants. The Council currently encourage 2 bedroom bungalows as the most appropriate unit type to meet this need allowing flexibility and the ability for an overnight carer if required in future.

Specialist Housing Need

Whilst housing need modelling is well established in terms of understanding overall housing need understanding demand for more specialist accommodation can be more challenging.

For older persons housing this is often based on assumptions about the proportion of the ageing population that are likely to need specialist housing.

However what is harder to forecast is the number of older people who will chose to remain in their existing accommodation, even where this is not entirely suitable. This will in part be informed by the quality of alternatives available and explains why despite an increasing aging population older sheltered accommodation can suffer some of the lowest demand of any social housing.

The Leicestershire County Council Adult Social Care Accommodation Strategy 2016-2036 identified a net need for 2,097 specialist homes for older people by 2036 within North West Leicestershire.

The Elderly Accommodation Council toolkit suggests a ratio for provision which would identify a need over the period as set out in the table below.

Type	Need
Sheltered	1498
Enhanced Sheltered	240
Extra Care	300

The County Council Investment Prospectus 2019-2037 identified an investment need for the County Council of 120 units of Extra Care in the district over this period. This would amount to two schemes over the life of the prospectus.

Whilst it is widely accepted that prevalence rates can be a good indicator of likely demand for older persons housing such an approach is not as accepted for other groups with specific needs. Therefore to identify the need for other accommodation types it is more common to start with the existing customer base and try to predict likely changes in demand going forward which will in part be driven by the services people have previously received.

The Leicestershire Adult Social Care Accommodation Strategy for Working Age Adults 2017-2022 identified existing levels of need by district as well as forecast whether they say need increasing or decreasing over the next five years. The Working Age Adults Strategy seeks to develop supported housing for a range of people with social care needs and there will be a range of models that may be appropriate depending on individual need.

The assessment for North West Leicestershire is set out in the table below

Element	Current Demand	Change over 5 years
Pathway to Housing Waiting List	11	Static
Transforming Care Group	22	Rising
Young individuals in transition to adult services	34	Static
Currently living at home	94	Static

As can be seen in the above table the largest cohort is those currently living at home and for a number of years the County Council have identified those with adult social care needs living with

aging parents as a group that are likely to need alternative accommodation as their needs change and their parents age.

The HEDNA estimates the level of change of a number of health issues likely to impact on the suitability of housing within the District although it is worth noting this is likely to overlap with the two groups identified in the previous 2 tables and cannot be considered in isolation.

	Estimate Population 2011	Estimated Population 2036	Change	% increase
Dementia	1,108	2,395	1,287	116%
Mobility Problems	2,948	5,830	2,883	98%

The HEDNA provided its own projections of need for specialist older persons housing forecasting the need for 1,332 specialist units by 2036.

It is worth noting that whilst there is a range of complimentary data around specialist housing need this will often overlap and at times reach quite varying conclusions as a result of different approaches. When planning specialist accommodation it is important to firstly agree a standardised baseline across all key stakeholders which includes the wishes of likely future inhabitant.

Supply

Current Housing Market

As noted above the majority of housing supply comes from the existing housing stock. As at 31st March 2020 this was estimated to amount to just over 46,000 homes in North West Leicestershire, 86% of which were in the Private Sector.

Of the remaining social homes 4,181 were owned by the Council and a further 2,165 by registered providers.

The Private Rented Sector

Historically tenure polarised between owner occupation and social rented housing however over the last 20 years the Private Rented Sector has grown significantly and begun to fulfil a range of functions.

- A short term solution to those saving up a deposit to purchase in some circumstances
- A necessary alternative to those unable to access social housing but unable to buy
- A tenure of choice for those who want flexibility, short term commitment and the widest choice in terms of location and facilities provided.

Although it is difficult to estimate the current size of the private rented sector in North West Leicestershire, at the time of the 2011 census, the last comprehensive data available, 10.2% of households in the district rented privately from a landlord or letting agency a figure that is likely to have increased. At the time North West Leicestershire was ranked 290 out of 348 Local Authority areas across England and Wales contrasting with the 37.8% who owned with a mortgage or loan who were ranked 64th out of 348. This suggests that traditionally at least the private sector has had less impact on the district.

The table below compares the size of the PRS at the time of the 2011 census for NWL and its neighbouring authorities.

Authority	% PRS
Charnwood	12.9
Rushcliffe	12.2
Erewash	11.8
South Derbyshire	11.8
Hinckley and Bosworth	10.3
North West Leicestershire	10.2
North Warwickshire	10.2
Lichfield	8.4

Even amongst our immediate neighbours there was significant variation at the time although the size of the PRS in North West Leicestershire was only slightly below Hinckley and Bosworth and above Lichfield.

Social Sector

The tables below show the current stock levels of rented homes owned by the Council and all properties owned by Registered Providers in the district at 1st August 2021.

The proportion of smaller units designated at supported or sheltered in the Council stock is particularly noticeable restricting the opportunities for smaller households without support needs to access accommodation.

Local Authority Owned Stock by Category							
ATTRIBUTE	BEDROOMS						Total Properties
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
GENERAL	45	217	922	1859	145	5	3193
SHELTERED	10	207	74	6			297
SUPPORTED	9	449	228	5			691
Total	64	873	1224	1870	145	5	4181

Total Registered Provider stock (all tenures) as at end Q1 2021							
House type	BEDROOMS						Total Properties
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Flats	16	404	235	4	0	0	659
Bungalows	0	93	312	28	1	0	434
Houses	0	71	843	872	39	1	1826
Rooms in Shared houses	0	4	6	0	1	0	11
Rooms in hostel	0	15	0	0	0	0	15
Total	16	587	1396	904	41	1	2945

Supported/Sheltered Registered Provider stock (all tenures)

House type	BEDROOMS						Total Properties
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Flats	0	18	23	1	0	0	42
Bungalows	0	21	106	0	0	0	127
Houses	0	0	3	1	4	0	8
Rooms in Shared houses	0	4	6	0	1	0	11
Rooms in hostel	0	15	0	0	0	0	15
Total	0	58	138	2	5	0	203

In particular with the nature of the right to buy planning for the shape of the future housing stock can be challenging as the Council has no control over which units are sold each year.

Therefore to understand the likely need going forward it is important that the profile of affordable housing is understood as a dynamic situation.

Delivery of New Homes

Although new homes make up a small proportion of the overall housing stock the majority of existing homes are occupied on a long term basis and so new supply makes a disproportionate contribution to meeting housing need.

The table below shows net completions of housing per year for the period 2011 – 2020. Over this period delivery has averaged 616 homes per year across all tenures against the need figure identified in the HEDNA of 481 per annum.

Year	Completions
2011/12	235
2012/13	365
2013/14	428
2014/15	686
2015/16	628
2016/17	727
2017/18	978
2018/19	710
2019/20	790

Delivery of new affordable housing over the first 10 years of the period covered by the HEDNA split between rented and affordable home ownership is set out in the table below. The average delivery over this period has been 122 homes per year, remaining below the need figure of 199 units per year identified in the HEDNA.

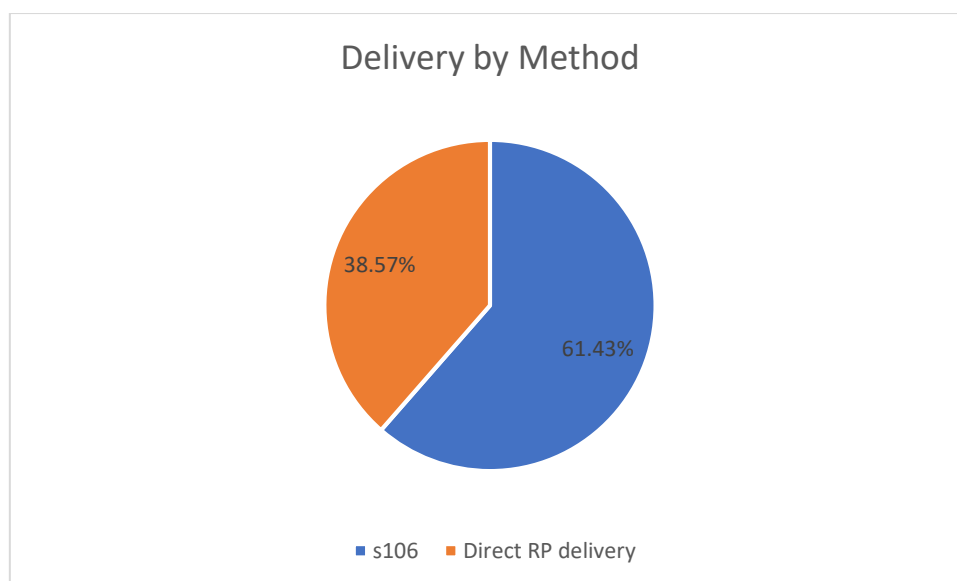
Year	Rented	Affordable Home Ownership	total
2011-12	44	16	60
2012-13	60	31	91
2013-14	125	32	157
2014-15	77	40	117
2015-16	87	39	126
2016-17	96	44	140
2017-18	92	52	144
2018-19	104	13	117
2019-20	109	20	129
2020-21	100	48	148

Over this period around 73% of homes were delivered for rent, as the modelling suggested 80% of need was for rented units this means that the shortfall for rented homes was greater than LCHO. It is worth noting that this is in part though as a result of section 106 schemes negotiated when the identified need suggested a 70/30 split and demonstrates the issue of the implications of the long lead in times of affordable housing. Furthermore during the delivery period there have been a number of Homes England funded programmes with an increased emphasis on Shared Ownership increasing the opportunities to bring forward such schemes.

The table below shows delivery split between those units that have come forward through the planning system as a result of section 106 agreements and those delivered directly by Registered providers.

Year	s106	Direct RP delivery	Total
2011-12	6	54	60
2012-13	86	5	91
2013-14	87	70	157
2014-15	80	37	117
2015-16	89	37	126
2016-17	63	77	140
2017-18	112	32	144
2018-19	65	52	117
2019-20	62	67	129
2020-21	105	43	148
Total	755	474	1229

Although there is some fluctuation year on year around two thirds of homes were delivered by the market over this period as illustrated in the chart below.



The Council also monitors the size of homes that are built each year.

The table below compares actual delivery against the HEDNA recommendation. Because the HEDNA produced a range target the mid-point of the range was used for comparison purposes.

		1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Market	2018/19	-2.60%	-24.30%	-13.40%	35.30%
	2019/20	-3.90%	-22.70%	-15.30%	36.90%
Affordable	2018/19	-17.12%	31.73%	-12.12%	-7.50%
	2019/20	-14.70%	22.20%	-5.00%	-7.50%

As can be seen neither sector has effectively delivered against identified need. That may in part be due to the fact that housing need models plan for balancing the housing needs over a long term period whereas in practice developers focus on addressing immediate need and demand. This is reflected in the oversupply of 2 bedroom homes in the affordable sector, although this is in part because of our approach to meeting older persons need as identified above. Within the market sector there has been an oversupply of larger homes, 4 bed and above compared to identified need with an undersupply of all smaller property sizes.

There is a suggestion that the emphasis on larger homes for market sale at the expense of smaller units which by default are more affordable generates a demand for both the housing register and low cost home ownership which could be fully met by the market if a proportion of smaller units like 2 bed townhouses were built for outright sale. As we develop an understanding of the comparative demand and need for the increasing range of low cost home ownership products it is important we understand the role that entry level fully market housing could play in meeting the need.

Affordability

Alongside availability the other factor that needs to be addressed is affordability if people's housing needs are to be met.

Hometrack is a housing market data tool which calculates the comparative cost of different tenures based on a large and wide ranging data set. The table below shows average costs across the district as of August 2021.

	Average price	Repayment mortgage	LCHO	Private rent	Intermediate rent
1 bed property	£142,500	£729	£569	£472	£378
2 bed property	£150,000	£767	£599	£624	£499
3 bed property	£200,000	£1,023	£799	£750	£600

This demonstrates that with the exception of for 2 bed properties private rental is a more affordable option than Low Cost Home Ownership. This anomaly reflects the relatively small differential in average sale prices compared to rental yield. Understanding the relationship between private rents and LCHO costs is important when understanding the demand for such products.

Although the assumptions made above for Low Cost Home Ownership are an average based on a range of products the costs will vary. For those with the entitlement, the Right to Buy will be one of the most affordable routes into home ownership with a maximum discount of £84,600 available in the region. Based on the assumptions in the above table the below sets out the comparative costs, level of discount and time to accumulate the maximum discount that an existing tenant could realise.

	Percentage Discount	Time to reach maximum discount	Monthly Cost
1 bed (flat)	59.37	5 years	£296
2 bed (house)	56.4	26 years	£334
3 bed (house)	42.3	12 years	£590

It is worth noting however that the Right to Buy as its name suggests is an entitlement to certain social tenants, currently limited to council tenants (or those who were council tenants at the time of stock transfer) and a small number of housing association tenants who participated in a pilot to extend the scheme. It is currently unclear whether the proposed roll out to housing association tenants will proceed. The right to buy is not a Low Cost Home Ownership Product a household chooses to access but is instead an opportunity afforded to them in certain circumstances.

Owner Occupation

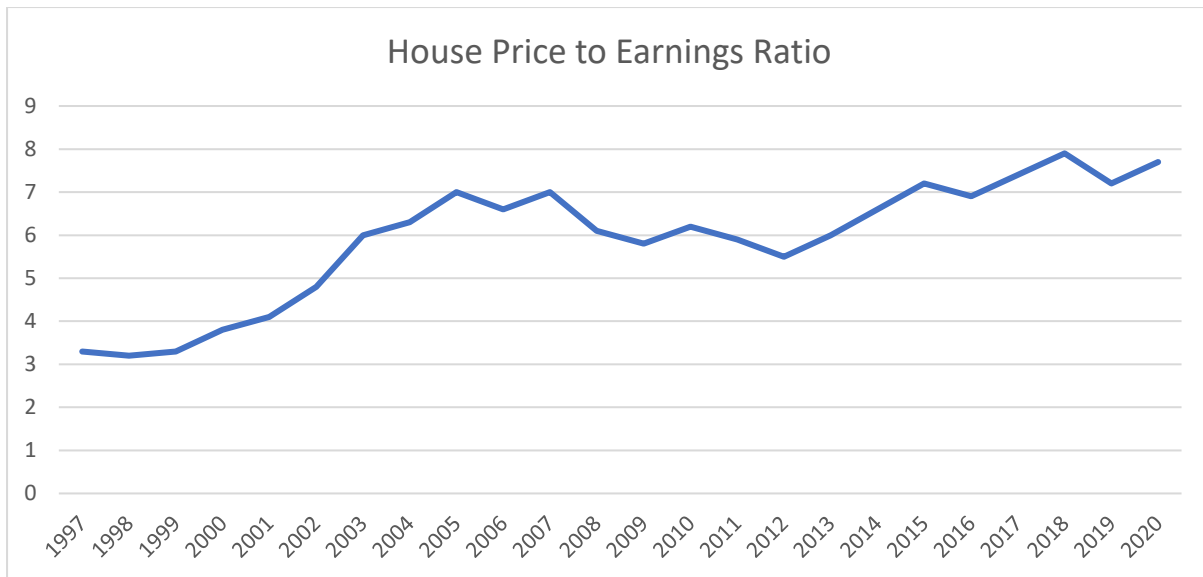
At the time of the 2011 census 72.5% of households within the district defined themselves as owner occupiers with an additional 1% shared owners.

Whilst for existing home owners (providing they do not need to trade up) rising house prices are seen as a positive thing, for would be first time buyers housing affordability is a key factor in whether they can meet their housing needs through their tenure of choice.

The Office of National Statistics produce a House Price to Earnings ratio figure for local authority districts in England and Wales.¹

As we can see, since the late 1990s the ratio has more than doubled from just over 3 to close to 8 and despite a period of slight decline between 2007 and 2013 the trend has been upward for over 20 years.

¹ [Housing affordability in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/housing/articles/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales)



Affordability in the Private Rented Sector

As can be seen from the Hometrack comparison table above the PRS is considerably cheaper than purchasing a property with a repayment mortgage. The issue of affordability is particularly pertinent for those who are reliant on state assistance to cover their housing costs.

The table below sets out the Local Housing Allowance rates (the level of eligible housing costs that will be covered by benefit) payable for different property sizes across the district. The majority of the district falls into the Leicester and Surrounds Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) with a small number of homes on the borders falling into East Staffordshire and Derby. LHA is paid against calculated bedroom need rather than the actual size of the property rented. When we compare the figures with the estimated costs in the Hometrack average above we can see a gap for all sizes of accommodation in all of the three Broad Rental Market Areas.

BRMA	Shared room rate	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms
Leicester and surrounds	£338.00	£448.76	£563.46	£673.14	£892.54
Eastern Staffordshire	£290.68	£423.84	£523.55	£623.31	£792.83
Derby	£272.26	£393.90	£498.64	£593.36	£792.83

To gain an indication of the availability of accommodation within LHA rates a sample of Rightmove adverts was carried out on 8th June 2021 comparing property sizes with the respective LHA rates for the area they fell within. The results are set out in the table below.

Property Size	No. of Properties within LHA	Number of adverts
Single Room	0	12
1 bed	0	7
2 bed	3	21
3 bed	1	21
4 bed	1	6
All	5	67

As can be seen just 5 out of 67 or 7.5% of the properties advertised were accessible to someone reliant on Local Housing Allowance highlighting the challenge faced by those on low incomes unable to access social housing.

Affordability in the Social Sector

Whilst it is generally expected that by their very nature homes in the social sector will be affordable there are a number of factors that can challenge this assumption. Firstly the introduction of the total benefit cap means that for some households even social housing may be considered unaffordable and the introduction of the size criteria for benefits in social housing mean that through a lack of choice a number of people are living in homes where their housing costs are not met in full by benefits.

Furthermore the Rightmove cost comparison suggests that with the exception of 2 bedroom homes, Low Cost Home Ownership is likely to be a more expensive alternative to private renting despite being an affordable housing product.

Even then in the social sector it is important we understand need to ensure that properties remain affordable in the long term.

Issues Identified During Consultation

Members of the public were encouraged to identify whether their current accommodation met their needs, if and how their needs had changed over time and whether they were intending to move in the near future.

Of the 140 individuals who responded 40% of people responding felt their own home didn't meet their needs, 20% were aware of others experiencing housing difficulties and the reasons people felt that homes were unsuitable were similar for both groups.

The qualitative responses were most useful allowing us to triangulate information from housing register applications, the HEDNA and other sources to gain a greater understanding of the housing issues people face.

The majority of people who reported their homes did not meet their needs either reported issues from growing families or the need to downsize with issues raised extending beyond simply the number of bedrooms. People who needed more space reported the need for storage and outdoor space whilst those ready to downsize reported issues such as difficulties maintaining large spaces such as gardens.

Respondents were asked about whether they had changed the way they used their housing over the last two years. It is not surprising that a number of respondents identified either home schooling or working from home as changes.

It is unlikely that there will be a significant long term shift to home schooling although the success of provision during lockdowns may change the way schools deal with issues such as staff absence or other short term outbreaks of disease in the future, whilst it is likely that many employers and staff will want to maintain some of the benefits that can come from working from home.

As a result whilst we are unlikely to be specifying home offices and class rooms within our expectations for new housing the opportunity for space to be used flexibly is one that should be promoted and architects should be encouraged to demonstrate within their designs the multi-function nature of layouts and consider broad band connectivity both to and within the home.

The issue of affordability was raised by a number of respondents and specific concerns around the tendency to focus newbuild on larger homes (borne out by data above) and the difficulties faced accessing mortgage finance in non-secure employment were raised.

Transport was identified as a key issue by a number of respondents both in terms of the importance of secure and convenient parking but also access to efficient public transport as well as the need for sufficient facilities to reflect the level of growth in some parts of the district.

A number of issues raised by partners overlapped with those of the public, in particular the need for sufficient infrastructure to support the level of growth the district has seen in recent years.

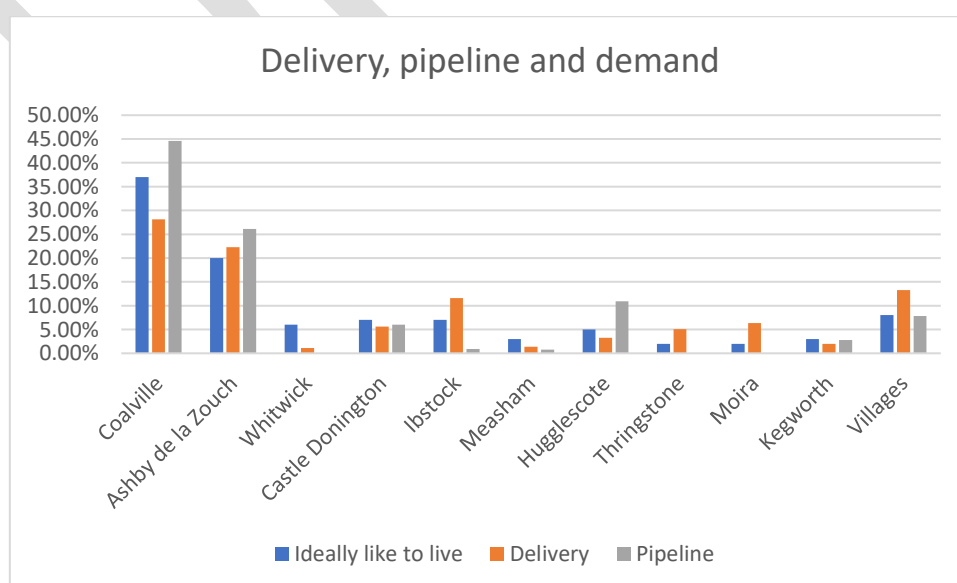
Partners did raise concerns about the sustainability of growth at a similar scale going forward both due to physical constraints such as the Rive Mease Special Area of Conservation and the costs of meeting infrastructure requirements and their impact on deliverability and viability.

Concerns were raised that there appeared to be a shift in the pattern of delivery of affordable housing and this was leading to a concentration of new homes in a more limited number of areas.

Further analysis of the pattern of development of new affordable housing considered below.

Patterns of Development

The table below shows the special spread of demand for new affordable housing as identified through housing register applications, the location of actual delivery over the last 6 years together with the pipeline of delivery as expected through planning permissions and site allocations.



The chart does appear to demonstrate an increasing concentration with 82% of pipeline delivery concentrated in Ashby, Coalville and Hugglescote whilst only 62% of housing register applicants identified them as their first area of choice. A number of large village settlements whilst demonstrating a degree of demand see little or no development planned in future years.

To ensure that demand and need are met where they arise work will need to be done to rebalance delivery of new affordable housing going forward and indeed the Council is exploring opportunities in Whitwick, Measham and Moira as part of its newbuild programme which will assist this rebalancing. We will work with all stakeholders to identify opportunities to bring forward affordable housing across the district.

Furthermore the Council remains committed to new rural affordable housing as a method of protecting local communities and ensuring they remain vibrant and will continue to explore opportunities to develop affordable housing in rural areas through exception sites and other routes and maintain partnerships to facilitate rural development.

Concerns have been raised that development over recent years has had an impact on the character of settlements and infrastructure has not always met aspirations as communities grow. Whilst the table above illustrates affordable housing the pattern for market housing should be similar and so an increased focus on development in larger settlements should mitigate these concerns to an extent. Furthermore new site allocations are subject to a formal assessment of suitability although infill development in existing settlements may not be subject to the same scrutiny. When assessing potential infill developments for affordable housing consideration as to existing community infrastructure will be considered as part of a holistic assessment both in terms of the principal of development but also in terms of the type and tenure of accommodation developed.

Constraints to Development

A further challenge identified are the constraints currently facing development. Some of these are geographical, such as the fact that a significant proportion of the district cannot sustain further housing development at this time due to the limitations imposed by the river Mease Special Area of Conservation. However it is equally important to understand that a range of other factors act as a constraint on development where they impact on viability and these must be borne in mind when setting priorities and balancing competing aspirations, including specification, tenure and property types.

Peoples Changing Housing Needs

Responses to the consultation confirmed that changing housing needs are in many cases a natural part of peoples changing lives. Some of these changing needs will be best met by adapting the existing surroundings whilst others will require a change of home.

The majority of people will be able to address these changing needs themselves either through home improvement or alterations or moving home in a controlled manner, therefore our focus should be on those who are unable to meet their needs themselves.

To do this we should ensure that new homes are planned to be flexible and wherever possible those that can meet more specialist needs are prioritised when planning new affordable housing.

Structural Changes

The facilities that are deemed necessities to housing change over time. It is less than 4 generations ago that indoor sanitation became standard by which time only two thirds of homes had electricity.

It is less than one generation since mobile phone reception and internet connectivity went from a luxury to a near universal pre-requisite in a new home. A range of factors not least environmental concerns are likely to change the infrastructure that becomes standard within our homes.

Electric Vehicles

It is very clear that the interaction between people's homes and transport is one of particular importance. This has held true for many years and the Victoria railway network made a significant impact on urban development. More recently the availability of car parking has become an increasing priority for new home seekers and in future the access to electric charging points is likely to be a key consideration for home seekers.

Whilst such infrastructure can be easily accommodated in new development ensuring that such facilities are easily accessible in existing housing where a significant proportion was developed before the advent of the motor car itself will prove more challenging.

Clean Energy

Energy usage both in terms of electricity generation and direct heating systems have caused a considerable contribution to climate change and if the Government are to meet the targets they have committed to retrofitting existing housing stock will be a significant challenge which will come at a significant cost.

Estimates to make existing homes zero carbon vary between £10,000 and £20,000 and as well as funding there are likely to be challenges in terms of scaling up interventions.

Measures that reduce overall energy usage or introduce self-generated energy will also help address fuel poverty for affected households.

Connectivity

The recent Covid restrictions have forced many individuals to become remote workers connected through virtual meetings to work colleagues they had recently shared an office with whilst children were forced to join virtual classrooms.

This coupled with a reliance in internet connectivity for media and the development of the internet of things has lead to a significant increase in demand for internet bandwidth.

Future smart homes could be built with the infrastructure already in place to see us through our life from virtual schooling through to assistive technology to allow us to remain independent in our old age and increasingly the data capacity of new developments will be as critical as water supply or electricity.

Retrofitting is expensive and intrusive and so wherever possible housing should be developed that is future ready. Furthermore opportunities should be taken to retrofit the necessary infrastructure into existing homes alongside currently planned work wherever appropriate.

Demographic Changes

There is anecdotal evidence that the demographics of the district are changing with an increase in Houses in Multiple Occupation particularly in areas that service new industry such as the distribution centres around the Airport and East Midlands Gateway.

If this is the case then further inward investment such as the Free Port and HS2 may amplify the effect and it is important we understand the wider implications on the Housing Market

The new Census data due between March 2022 and March 2023 will provide the most comprehensive indication of changes and a range of Council held data sets can be used to triangulate and better understand the likely impacts over the medium term.

Identifying the most effective way to meet changing needs

One challenge will be identifying the most effective way of meeting peoples changing needs and identifying the most suitable resources. For example there has been a focus on new development in recent years that at times has perhaps neglected the benefits from investing in existing homes. Whilst initiatives such as socially prescribing home improvements have been explored they have not gained significant traction. When addressing challenges around both Zero Carbon but also household affordability the ability to invest in existing homes in all tenures will be key and has a significant role in meeting need in situ.

Expectations and understanding around specialist accommodation is constantly evolving. For example retirement housing built in living memory in many cases does not meet the changing needs and expectations of our current growing ageing population. In other areas too improvements in technology and healthcare together with a focus on independence means that a more responsive bespoke offer combining appropriate accommodation, technology and support will be required and a uniform “supported housing” offer is no longer fit for purpose.

We will work to bring together all necessary stakeholders to ensure that our offer meets both existing and emerging needs.

The Housing White Paper

In November 2020 the Government published its Housing White paper setting out changes to the way social housing organisations will operate in the future. The white paper has implications for the Council as a landlord but also as an enabler and facilitator. For example the white paper extends the notion of the decent home standard and considers good quality homes and neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood is seen as both a physical but also social concept and includes issues such as anti-social behaviour. In many areas an effective response will require multiple landlords to work together effectively with other agencies.

The Council will work with other social landlords within the district to co-ordinate activity to best meet the objectives of the White Paper.

To reflect the mixed tenure characteristic of much of the district a focus on the wider quality of neighbourhoods both new and existing is both necessary to embrace the ambition of the white paper but also to meet the aspirations of the wider community.

Areas for Action

To ensure the best fit between the districts housing needs and housing supply there are four priority areas for Action. These are

- Developing a Better Understanding of Need
- Encouraging More Flexible Homes
- Future Proofing Investment
- Rebalancing supply

Developing a better understanding of need

A number of the current data sources from which we derive our understanding of need are reaching the end of their effective period, census data for example is now over ten years old and the HEDNA is in the process of being refreshed. Furthermore the Council is improving the information that it holds and this will all allow more informed decisions to be made going forward.

The replacement document the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) will also need to inform what role the district plays in meeting wider housing need in the sub-region.

Therefore a priority for the early years of this strategy is to consolidate the newly available data sets to build a better understanding of long term need to ensure that future investment is most suited to emerging and unmet need.

The Council is committed to providing choice to those in housing need and at times customer aspirations can be misaligned with objectively identified need. We will work to understand where need and demand are most misaligned and develop approaches to ensure we do not develop stock that will not meet the needs expected.

Currently the level of information on specialist needs is quite limited and focussed on physical components of a property such as accessible bathing facilities. Specialist needs are much broader than property components and can relate to the wider setting and neighbourhood accommodation is located in. To properly understand need it is important that the holistic requirements of accommodation are properly acknowledged.

Areas of focus will include

- Understanding the findings of the Census 2021
- Applying the revised HEDNA to existing and future policies
- Improving the quality of and making better use of Council owned data
- Ensuring we have needs data at a level necessary to make informed choices
- Agreeing a shared understanding of specialist need across key partners for all tenures and understanding the wishes of future residents
- Understanding the differing need for competing Low Cost Home Ownership products

As a result of the emerging evidence in this area need figures will evolve over the lifetime of this strategy and so a mechanism for maintaining this dynamic need information will need to be developed, as well as a clear and transparent mechanism for utilising the data in setting policies being mindful of relevant constraints.

Encourage more flexible Homes

Recent experience has demonstrated the need to be flexible and agile in our homes. Furthermore a move will not always be an appropriate or even achievable option when needs change. As a result we need to ensure that both in terms of new development and investment in existing homes and services we aim to ensure that homes can be as flexible to our changing needs as possible.

Areas of focus will include

- Good building design and layout to reflect expectations in the Council's local plan
- Space standards
- Developing more agile and responsive housing services
- Reviewing the designation of existing homes and who can live in them

- Considering how we approach adaptation as part of investment strategies

Futureproofing investment

There are likely to be a range of factors that impact on meeting our future housing needs including the need to move towards a Zero Carbon economy and an increasing reliance on information technology in all aspects of our life. To ensure that investment is most effective in terms of utility, future investment and environmental impact it is important that all significant investment is properly understood.

Furthermore when planning new investment it is important we involve all key stakeholders to ensure we are making the right investment decisions.

Many of these challenges will be shared by landlords working within the district and neighbouring districts. We will explore opportunities to share best practice, expertise and also opportunities to benefit from the economies of scale co-ordinated approaches may achieve.

Furthermore the Housing White Paper sets expectations around housing management that go beyond the physical stock. We will also look at the opportunities for shared investment in community development.

Areas of focus will include

- Supporting investment across all tenures
- Gaining an understanding of community investment needs
- Understanding the cost/benefit of capital and non-capital investment
- Ensuring investment in existing stock is as aspirational as newbuild
- Ensuring new technologies are adopted and implemented in collaboration with end users

Rebalancing supply

As we have outlined above there has been some success with delivering new homes. We have seen an increase over time of the number of new affordable homes being delivered and overall housing delivery has exceeded local targets for the last five years but there is a concern that in some areas overall delivery has not been aligned to identified need. Therefore we need to identify what tools and levers we have to rebalance delivery going forward. The Council is approaching a Local Plan review and this will have a key role in delivering this objective.

There is a feeling amongst communities that development is not always addressing need and there are limited opportunities for the Council to influence the use of market housing. However where particular issues are identified some options may be available and should be considered.

Furthermore as the majority of supply available to meet new homes will come from existing stock we will explore opportunities to better align that with identified need.

Areas of focus will include

- Understanding the geographic spread of future affordable housing delivery and how this aligns to identified current and forecast future need
- How we can influence sizes and types of market housing
- The role of the Council as both a developer of, and enabler of affordable housing

- What options are available to meet specialist housing needs including how local plan policies can support this
- How we make retirement housing an attractive option when needed
- Options to change the approach to existing supply to more effectively meet identified need

To have a significant impact in this area it will be necessary to identify housing sub-markets and understand the drivers for activity within them which could include a range of agents, constraints and opportunities.

DRAFT