

## End of year review : Housing Strategy Action Plan April 2017 to March 2018

The most critical housing issue for the Council stems from the pressure to deliver new housing growth. This is important to meet the needs of the current and future population, and also to help meet front line needs for affordable housing, enabling households in need of affordable homes to be allocated these promptly thereby reducing the use of temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast establishments.

The barriers to achieving a stable level of housing growth include the availability of land and the funding required to deliver growth and infrastructure. As set out in the Housing Strategy 2017-20, Government policies which have previously steered provision towards forms of home ownership rather than conventional models of affordable housing have impacted on the rate of delivery of new affordable housing.

The action plan below sets out clearly how this Council will work in partnership to tackle key issues identified in the Housing Strategy 2017-20 and provides a summary of the progress made towards addressing those issues. Each action has a RAG status to identify progress made towards completion of each action: Red (R) – Action could not be completed, Amber (A) – Action is ongoing or has experienced some obstacles or Green (G) – Action has been achieved (and in some cases is being continued into 2018/19).

Priority 1- to increase the supply of new and affordable housing we will :			
No.	RAG	Action	Achievement
1.	<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prepare and adopt an ambitious Local Plan to guide the future growth of Huntingdonshire which enables the delivery of new homes to exceed Objectively Assessed Need including a significant number of affordable homes, and maintain a 5-year land supply position.</li> </ul>	The Proposed Submission version was considered by Full Council on 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2017 and a consultation took place between 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2017 and 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2018. Formal submission for independent examination was submitted by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018. The hearings for the Examination in Public started on 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2018.
	<b>G</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enable the provision of new affordable housing to help meet local needs including specialist and supported housing needs through section 106 and other sources.</li> </ul>	Through the policies in the current Local Plan, Officers secured the delivery of 123 new affordable homes which completed during 2017/18.
2	<b>G</b>	Host a myth-buster tour and a half-day workshop to encourage the development of rural exception housing in partnership with the rural housing enabler and parish councils.	On 5th July 2017 a myth buster tour took place. All Parish/district councillors were invited and 14 attended representing 12 Parishes or Wards . On 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2017 a Parish Conference was hosted by HDC. 40 Parishes or wards were represented and participants were given information on a number of themes including Rural Exception Sites.

			<p>The events highlighted the housing, social and economic value of new housing schemes and is part of our continuing efforts to make communities aware of rural housing issues and secure local support, recognising the challenges of delivering new housing schemes.</p> <p>Unfortunately the events did not generate any additional interest from Parishes in forming Community Land Trusts but this is something which Officers will continue to explore alongside Parishes and a further event took place to engage with communities in June 2018 (see action point 11).</p>
3	G	Maintain a list of sites which may be suitable for affordable housing funding from the Combined Authority and work with local housing providers and developers to ensure schemes in Huntingdonshire are best placed to attract the funding.	Officers are working extensively with Registered Providers and developers to understand their development programmes and any viability challenges to ensure that all opportunities to access Combined Authority housing funding are maximised. To date, two affordable housing schemes have received CPCA funding (Offord Darcy and St Mary's Road, Ramsey).
4	G	Prepare a report to identify gaps in the skills, capacity and resources currently available which are necessary to enable the council to pursue opportunities to use its own money, or borrow, to increase the provision of affordable housing.	<p>A report has been prepared to start to identify some of the gaps in skills, capacity and resources which can prevent HDC from directly increasing the provision of affordable housing. Some of skills gaps include scheme design, project management, value engineering and property management.</p> <p>This skills analysis was utilised by Altair Consultancy when advising the Council on the best form of housing delivery vehicle for HDC. The skills analysis highlighted that unless additional resource is brought into the Council, the best option for HDC would be to create a housing company to deliver a new-build programme on our behalf or to work in partnership with another local authority or existing housing company.</p>
5	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implement the resolution of Cabinet relating to the disposal of the first parcels of land which have been identified to facilitate affordable housing.</li> <li>○ Ensure the appropriate structures for approving asset disposals are in place and sell assets accordingly.</li> </ul>	<p>Cabinet determined that it would not dispose of any HDC owned sites during 2017/18 whilst the Council is exploring options for a housing delivery vehicle.</p> <p>Officers have continued to appraise HDC owned sites to ensure that following any decision of Cabinet to dispose of sites on the open market, or to a HDC housing company or Registered Provider, we are better placed to understand the value of the sites in terms of its ability to gain planning consent or provide affordable or temporary accommodation.</p>

6	G	Prepare an options paper on different models of housing companies and joint ventures to enable the council to explore the value of creating a Housing Company or entering into a joint venture to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing.	HDC applied for support from the Local Government Association through the Housing Advisors programme to obtain advice on the best form of housing delivery vehicle for HDC to pursue. The application was successful and LGA appointed Altair Consultancy to prepare a report for HDC which indicated that in view of the gaps in skills and resources currently within HDC, the best options to deliver new affordable homes are either the creation of a Wholly Owned Housing Company or working in partnership through a joint venture. The Altair report and a covering Officers report have been shared with HDC's leadership for consideration.
7	A	Ensure our approach to Community Infrastructure Levy is used creatively to enable housing growth.	Government issued a consultation responding to some of the recommendation from CIL Review. HDC submitted responses to the "Supporting housing delivery through developer contributions: Reforming developer contributions to affordable housing and infrastructure Consultation" along with the National Planning Policy Framework Consultation (NPPF) on 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2018. Although not a consultation document, draft guidance regarding viability was also published at this time and responses noted within the formal consultation documents. The outcome of these is anticipated in the summer. The creative use of CIL is continuing to be explored as we await the outcome of the consultations.
8	G	Support bids and explore potential sources of external funding for housing and infrastructure where opportunities exist, especially from the HCA.	<p>Officers have worked closely with Registered Providers, CPCA and Homes England to support funding applications which will enable the delivery of 54 new affordable homes.</p> <p>Officers also worked on funding applications for two schemes through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) which was announced by Government in July 2017. The application for a Strategic scheme had to be submitted by the CPCA and the scheme for a third river crossing was not their first choice. However, given the strength of the bid the CPCA did commit to developing a Business Case for the scheme, to open up the possibility of funding through a future funding round.</p> <p>A second viability application to the HIP was prepared by Officers but could not be submitted to the HCA as the developer could no longer support it at that time and took up alternative loan funding option to deliver the infrastructure necessary for the strategic housing development.</p>

			Officers have arranged periodic meetings with the HCA (now Homes England) to monitor opportunities for new funding rounds and opportunities.
9	<b>G</b>	Use statutory enforcement powers, where appropriate, to reduce the number of empty homes in the district.	Leaving a home empty is not in itself a breach of planning regulations. However, powers to require improvements to land and buildings under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning can be used if a property's condition is detrimental to the amenity of the area. Use of these powers may put some pressure on owners to bring the property back into beneficial use. During the year one s.215 notice has been served on a property in St Ives which has been vacant for many years. The property is in a semi-derelict condition and the garden is overgrown. Court action is being taken because the owner has not complied with the requirements of the notice. Two further notices are to be served in respect of properties in Eynesbury and Yaxley.
10	<b>A</b>	Monitor the findings of the feasibility study commissioned by the Combined Authority into modular housing and explore whether there are opportunities to accelerate housing growth in Huntingdonshire.	The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is continuing to formulate its housing strategy and review options to accelerate and increase the supply of housing in the area, which may include modular housing.  HDC Officers have been working closely with Registered Providers to explore opportunities to deliver new affordable housing or temporary accommodation through modular construction. Officers have visited a site in London and are considering whether modular construction on the sites which HDC or RPs own could accelerate delivery.
11	<b>G</b>	Support communities exploring the potential for increasing the provision of affordable housing in their communities through the creation of initiatives such as Neighbourhood/Community Plans, Community Land Trusts and Community Right to Build.	The Council supports the provision of rural affordable housing through its Rural Exception sites programme. It also supports establishment of Neighbourhood Plans and 3 are now adopted and a further 9 are in preparation. Recently (in June 2018) the Council hosted a Neighbourhood Planning Networking and Peer Learning Event to raise awareness. Additionally, a Community Land Trust has now been established by Little Staughton Parish Council.
12	<b>G</b>	Maintain a register for custom and self build housing.	HDC continues to maintain the register and 35 people have expressed an interest in land across the district. The requirements vary from smaller plots for 3 bedroom homes to very large plots for 5+ bedroom homes. Most people have expressed a preference to have a plot in the open countryside.
13	<b>G</b>	Work in partnership with the developers and housing associations to positively influence the development	Officers continue to work in partnership to influence the design and delivery of strategic sites in the district. Officers take part in regular monthly liaison meetings,

		of the large strategic sites at Alconbury Weald and St Neots.	<p>raising and agreeing all pertinent matters. In accordance with Development Agreements, pre-application discussions take place to enable detailed and timely responses to proposed schemes in advance of Planning applications being submitted.</p> <p>Construction of housing on Phase 1 at Alconbury Weald is underway. The next steps for housing development at St Neots are to continue discussion with housebuilders and landowners to provide pre-application advice to enable a reserved matters application to be prepared should the outline application be granted.</p>
<b>Priority 2 – To identify housing need and improve health and wellbeing we will:</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
14	<b>G</b>	Review the Homelessness Strategy by the end of 2017/18.	A revised Homelessness Strategy was presented to and approved by Cabinet in October 2017. The Strategy sets out the options which are available to the Council in terms of preventing homelessness and increasing the supply of temporary accommodation to reduce the cost of provision. The Strategy highlights the significant increase in the number of households presenting as homeless and that the end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies is still the most prevalent cause of homelessness in the district. The limited supply of new affordable housing is affecting the ability for households to secure settled accommodation prior to reaching crisis point.
15	<b>G</b>	Implement the new regulations arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.	The new regulations came into effect in April 2018. Training sessions for staff took place with external trainers prior to implementation. To enable HDC to be fully equipped to respond to an anticipated increase in service provision, a revenue growth bid for additional staff was made and approved. Procurement of case management IT system, in hand with Home-Link partners, has taken place.
16	<b>G</b>	Prevent homelessness through a range of interventions including advice and assistance / landlord liaison / court advocacy / rent deposit schemes.	There were 363 successful homelessness preventions during 2017/18 against an annual target of 220 successful preventions. This highlights the extensive work of the team to reduce the number of people reaching a crisis point and requiring emergency temporary accommodation.

17	<b>G</b>	Increase the provision of temporary accommodation by providing an additional 10 units per year to help meet the needs of homeless households	HDC has increased access to self-contained nightly paid accommodation as an alternative to B&B. There has been an increase of 20 additional units in use compared to April 2017. Negotiations are on-going with housing associations regarding other options to increase the portfolio of temporary stock.
18	<b>G</b>	Review, with registered providers, the long term viability of temporary housing schemes within the district and prepare an options report for Scrutiny Panel examining the implications of rent caps on social tenancies and Housing Benefit subsidy changes.	HDC Officers are continuing to review with Registered Providers the long term viability of temporary housing schemes to ensure that there is not a net loss of temporary accommodation facilities. The Government announced that a new funding regime for temporary accommodation will now be launched by April 2020. Once details of new arrangements are known, an analysis of the impact on different types of temporary accommodation will be completed.
19	<b>G</b>	Prepare a twice yearly report for Executive Councillor analysing the need identified on the housing register and monitor the provision of new and proposed temporary accommodation or affordable housing to ensure it meets evidenced need.	Analysis of the property sizes of new build supply of affordable housing and the requirements of applicants on the housing register identified that the new-build supply of housing was: 19% 1 bedroom; 55% 2 bedrooms; 19% 3 bedrooms and 0% 4+ bedrooms. The property sizes required by applicants on the housing register is: 49% 1 bedroom; 34% 2 bedrooms; 12% 3 bedrooms; and 4% 4+bedrooms.  In respect of housing for rent, the type of housing sought on newbuild developments is based on an analysis of the housing register taking into account the supply of existing stock coming through as voids. Analysis of all of this data indicates that the appropriate mix of newbuild rented housing to meet needs, is being sought.  Demand for shared ownership housing is in part identified by reference to the number of applications to the Help to Buy Agent and the types of properties being sought. This analysis ensures that the provision of newbuild shared ownership housing reflects need.  Completions of rented and shared ownership housing on any newbuild development may occur over more than one year so in some years the proportion of homes of a specific type will differ. However, this analysis of supply and demand allows us to monitor and ensure that the overall balance is appropriate.
20	<b>A</b>	Prepare a report to evidence the demand for new	A Government consultation on Supported Housing Funding caused some

		extra care housing in the district following the adoption of the Cambridgeshire Extra Care Strategy and Market Position Statement and enable new extra care schemes subject to scheme viability.	uncertainty for local authorities and housing providers. Accordingly, plans to adopt a Cambridgeshire Extra Care Strategy and Market Position Statement stalled. However, Officers have maintained close relationships with colleagues at County Council and housing providers to understand the district wide demand for Extra Care housing and the turnover in individual schemes. A 'Housing for Older People Supply Recommendations' tool has indicated a current undersupply of 66 units of older-persons accommodation in Huntingdonshire. On top of this it has indicated that a further 107 units of older-persons accommodation will be required by 2025. Increasing the supply of older-persons accommodation will remain a priority into 2018/19.
21	G	Prepare an options paper/briefing note regarding the changes to legislation relating to supported housing funding and work with supported housing providers to ensure the long term viability of supported housing schemes.	There were two consultations on funding for supported housing in November 2016 and October 2017. HDC officers responded to both consultations to try to ensure that relevant considerations for Huntingdonshire were factored into emerging policy/legislation. During August 2018, Government announced that Housing Benefit will remain in place to fund supported but that it will develop a robust oversight regime for supported housing.
22	G	Ensure we have a 5 year supply of Gypsy and Traveller sites.	7 additional pitches were delivered in 2016/17. Sufficient consents have been granted up to 1st June 2018 to provide a 5 year supply.
<b>Priority 3 – To improve housing conditions in existing housing we will:</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
23	G	Improve private sector housing conditions through inspection and enforcement / tackling category 1 and 2 hazards / licensing HMOs where applicable / tackling illegal eviction.	<p>One suspended prohibition notice was served on a property let in poor condition and without appropriate planning consent.</p> <p>No other enforcement action has been necessary in the past year due to Officers seeking to rectify issues through the provision of advice and information. This has included providing advice and support to tenants and landlords aimed at resolving disputes which had the potential to escalate to court proceedings.</p> <p>Information has been provided to the landlords forum on the forthcoming changes to the regulations covering the operation of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and a further information campaign is planned for the summer of 2018.</p>
24	G	Promote good housing management standards through the organisation of twice yearly Private	The main purpose of the landlords Forum and Newsletters is to provide current information about local and national issues and legislation with a view to driving

		Landlord Forums.	<p>up standards in the private sector. Through this liaison, HDC is also able to increase access to privately rented accommodation for low paid families.</p> <p>The forum is held twice a year and is well supported with 10 -20 landlords attending. The Newsletter is produced twice a year and is circulated to over 100 landlords. They provide an opportunity for landlords to consider and discuss changes which affect them. Some recent topics have included fire safety, the Trailblazer Homeless Reduction initiative and emerging HMO regulations.</p>
25	G	Contribute to the nationwide database of rogue landlords and utilise the enforcement powers, such as banning orders and civil penalties, introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, where appropriate.	The national database has been established and login facilities have been provided for officers in Housing and Environmental Health to allow the exchange of information regarding rogue landlords.
26	G	Make provision for Disabled Facilities Grants and implement the findings of the multi-agency review of the programme.	<p>The three key findings of a multi-agency review of the DFG programme were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New services are needed that consider people’s needs in context, including early conversations and planning for the longer term.</li> <li>2. Existing services will need to adapt to support a growing population.</li> <li>3. Funding arrangements across the system will need to change to support a shift in focus.</li> </ol> <p>Following on from this review, new preventative measures have been introduced aimed specifically at early conversations to reduce demand for DFGs. HDC is working with authorities across Cambridgeshire on a joint housing renewals policy to improve efficiency. The Home Improvement Agency is also adapting to support a growing population and is subject to Performance Plan which is already providing effective at reducing the time taken to complete minor works.</p> <p>During 2017/18, 287 grants were completed which is the highest number since the CHIA was established in 2012. There is considerable demand for DFGs with 265 new applications validated during 2017/18. The most frequently requested work is for level access showers, stairlifts and access ramps to enable people to remain living safely in their homes.</p> <p>Given the significant increase in demand for DFGs, HDC will continue to focus on</p>



			improved preventative measures during 2018/19.
27	<b>G</b>	Maintain the Safer Homes Handyperson Scheme to help meet the needs of the ageing population and monitor its progress by attending quarterly meetings with the service providers and reporting annually to Executive Councillor.	The Safer Homes Handyperson (SHH) scheme continues to thrive and reports high levels of customer satisfaction with people feeling safer at home. During 2017/18, 402 residents in Huntingdonshire were supported by the service with works taking place in 339 homes and 69 people were able to be discharged from hospital directly as a result of an intervention (works). The most frequently required work was for grab rails and key safes. (See Action point 30 for action by SHH service to reduce fuel poverty.)
28	<b>G</b>	Licence and maintain standards within mobile home sites.	All licensed caravan sites have been inspected and found to be compliant with legislation. Initial work is underway in partnership with Planning Enforcement to address concerns related to local caravan sites which are operating without planning consent, so cannot be licensed.
29	<b>G</b>	Ensure good management of the Council's own mobile home site in St Neots.	Luminus Group manages the mobile home park on behalf of the Council. The Council closely monitors management of the park to ensure it is operating safely and efficiently through regular contact with Luminus and residents and site inspections. The site remains popular and several new residents moved onto the site during 2017/18.
30	<b>G</b>	Reduce the number of residents in fuel poverty by facilitating access to energy efficiency funding and by working with other Cambridgeshire councils and the Stay Well County Partnership.	<p>Huntingdonshire residents have utilised 25% of the funding provided by the Stay Well fund, accessing a total of £19,227.60. This fund is used to assist in oil, gas and electricity bill, small scale repairs/improvements to properties, in order to reduce energy use and improve comfort levels (eg, draught proofing, repair of broken windows, chimney balloons).</p> <p>HDC Officers were part of the Stay Well group that devised a Small Repairs Grant (SRG). The SRG allows for small repairs or energy efficiency improvements which are carried out by the SHH service. The SHH also undertakes an energy survey to assess any requirement for other measures such as loft insulation, and advises the householder on the grants available. The group is also devising an on-line tool to identify the range of grants available including those which are available to a householder.</p> <p>The 'Action on Energy Group' of Councils are working towards submitting an application for project funding from the Warm Homes fund, working in partnership</p>

			with Registered Providers in Cambridgeshire and to access funding directly from the energy Companies. The group has developed an ECOFlex statement which broadens the number of benefits which make a householder eligible for energy efficiency grants.
31	G	Investigate and tackle anti-social behaviour in association with the Police and other appropriate partners, including Housing Associations and other landlords.	A new Community Enforcement team has been established in the Community service which has responsibility for working with partners to investigate incidents of anti-social behaviour. The team has worked with the Police and a range of social landlords to tackle local issues. Tackling crime linked to vulnerable individuals and vulnerable locations has been re-adopted as a priority for the local Community Safety Partnership and some limited funding has been secured from the Cambridgeshire Police and Fire Commissioner to support these priorities.
<b>Priority 4 – To work in partnership to improve conditions we will:</b>			
		<b>Action</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
32	G	Continue to work in partnership with neighbouring Councils and housing associations through the Sub-Regional Housing Board, and implement the sub-regional Action Plan.	HDC officers have continued to work in partnership with colleagues across Cambridgeshire and some of the achievements of 2017/18 include: Preparation and implementation of Business Case for devolved housing fund. Preparation of a joint strategy for housing adaptations across Cambridgeshire. Production of the quarterly sub-regional housing market information bulletin. Promotion of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance' housing providers' accreditation. Implementation of the Trailblazer action plan to reduce homelessness.
33	G	Collaborate with neighbouring Councils in the Cambridge sub-region to develop the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and ensure it is a sound evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.	HDC has continued to work with neighbouring Councils to develop and maintain our SHMA evidence base. A supplementary report 'Huntingdonshire Objectively Assessed Housing Need' was published in April 2017 and will be subject to examination through the Local Plan process to ensure it is robust. The submission version of the Local Plan includes a target for 20,100 new dwellings based on the Objectively Assessed Need.
34	G	Manage the Home Improvement Agency shared service through representation on the Management Board.	The CHIA shared service has had a new manager in post since September 2017. A performance plan was introduced shortly thereafter and processes have improved and the average time taken to complete a DFG has reduced. The fees charged by the CHIA were increased to 15% from April 2017. £2.4 million was spend on DFGs in Huntingdonshire during 2017/18 and the associated

			<p>increase in fee income earned by the Agency has meant that fees do not have to increase further during 2018/19 for CHIA to maintain financial stability.</p> <p>HDC officers are continuing to work closely with CHIA to ensure processes are efficient and to prevent any duplications of work. The management board continues to oversee the CHIA work programme.</p>
35	<b>G</b>	<p>Work with the Combined Authority to prepare an overarching Housing Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</p>	<p>HDC Officers are continuing to work closely with CPCA to support them to formulate a Housing Strategy for the area and to utilise the £100 million funding which it has available. The CPCA has allocated funding for 2 schemes which will provide 52 new affordable homes in Huntingdonshire and made a commitment to prepare a Business Case for a possible third river crossing in Huntingdonshire which will enable further housing growth.</p>