

Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2016-19

APPENDIX 1

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Foreword

By Councillor Emma Wallis, Cabinet Member for Housing

Decent housing is a fundamental right for everyone. It plays an enormous part in our health and development; and the suitability and affordability of housing can be a major influence on the types of lives we are able to lead. This is why this Strategy is so important. It is why I would encourage you to read it, to use it and to help us change housing in Rotherham for the better.

The Strategy has been written at a time that could herald the most significant changes for housing in a generation. As I write this, the Housing and Planning Bill is progressing through the parliamentary system; the Bill if passed will bring enormous changes to our planning, house building and social housing systems. Amidst the undoubted opportunities elements of the Bill provide, there are also very real challenges ahead, particularly for our social housing system, which will make it increasingly difficult for people on modest incomes to afford suitable rented accommodation.

The people of Rotherham have a resilient spirit, are aspirational and open to change. This Strategy is therefore bold in both imagination and ambition. We are determined to ensure that housing in the Borough continues to improve and meet the needs of local people, despite the challenges we face. This ambition is based on two things; firstly our previous track record of delivering on our promises and secondly recognition that we can and will improve what we do.

But to improve we need your help; Rotherham Council cannot deliver on the ideas and intentions in this Strategy without all our partners also being ambitious for the Borough and committing to playing their part. We are grateful to those partners who have already helped us ensure we have a good quality housing offer, and specifically to those who have contributed to the development of this Strategy.

The Strategy has been developed following extensive research undertaken over a number of years. We have taken on board the views and aspirations of over two thousand different individuals and organisations. We therefore believe the evidence upon which we have based the Strategy is strong, and the arguments advanced and well-reasoned. Some of this evidence is published alongside this Strategy and is available on the same webpage.

By publishing this strategy we want to achieve the following things:

1. We want to be clear that Rotherham Council will do all that it can within its powers to ensure that our residents' right to decent housing becomes a reality.
2. We want to spell out in transparent terms, our immediate priorities for housing, whilst we continue in the direction of achieving the 30 year vision.



3. We want to make sure that the Rotherham Housing service plays a pivotal role in helping the Council to deliver its corporate priorities.
4. We want to demonstrate to you and to Government that as a housing service we will rise to the challenges we face.
5. Lastly we want to appeal to you, whether you are a citizen of Rotherham, a developer, landlord or indeed anyone else with an interest in Rotherham, to be aware of the opportunities within this document and to get involved in helping us make housing in Rotherham something we can all be proud of.

I hope you will find this document clear, concise and easy to read; we have tried to cut the waffle. I hope it is clear what we intend to do, why and how. Developing the Strategy has enabled the Council to think through what is important and what it is possible to achieve.

I am energised by the challenges ahead. I am even more excited about what we have the potential to achieve together.

Councillor Emma Wallis
Cabinet Member for Housing



Overview

Since our last Housing Strategy was produced in December 2012, we have achieved a lot in Rotherham and it is worth reflecting on some of our successes:

- Completed a review of Council-owned land to identify sites for new housing and sold nine sites through auction
- Bought 40 new homes to add to our Council stock
- New specialist bungalows built by our housing association partners
- Remodelled underused community centres into new Council housing
- Custom build register established and programme being developed
- 664 non-traditional Council houses have been thermally upgraded
- Significant improvements to the energy efficiency of privately owned / rented properties through various partnership schemes
- New private sector empty property policy and action plan produced
- Selective Licensing implemented in May 2015 in five areas of Rotherham
- Introduction of boroughwide forum for private landlords
- Tenancy Intervention Service established within Key Choices
- 'Moving on Panel' introduced for young people aged 16 to 24

However there is more to do. If we are to meet the requirements for new housing identified in our recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment, we need to be increasing build rates by at least 50%. The **housing growth** chapter sets out how we will do this overall, and is followed by chapters on each of the main tenures:

Social housing – which constitutes around a fifth of all homes in Rotherham and for which demand continues to be high. We need to ensure the right quantity, the right quality, and the right opportunities for people to move if their social rented home no longer meets their needs.

Private rented housing – the middle ground between social rented housing and home ownership, and the fastest growing tenure in the borough. We need to work with developers and landlords to raise the overall quality and ensure it becomes a positive choice for people, rather than just a compromise. We want to work in partnership to offer new products such as 'rent to buy', and also help to improve access to the sector for older people.

Home ownership – still the most prevalent tenure and, as consultation has revealed, what most residents aspire towards. We need to increase the opportunities available, particularly for first time buyers, and improve the way we market and communicate these to people.

Specialist housing – this overlaps with social housing and home ownership but needs to be considered in its own right as it is essential that we meet the changing needs of our population, in particular ensuring a wide range of high quality housing options suitable for older people and young people.

The Housing Strategy contributes to the Council's corporate priorities of being a child-centred borough; every adult being secure, responsible and empowered; a strong community in a clean, safe environment; and opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future.



Vision

Rotherham's 30 year vision for housing was established in December 2012 following extensive consultation with residents.

By 2043 we want to see:

- People living in high quality homes, whether in the social rented, private rented or home ownership sector
- Rotherham Council playing its part by being the best housing provider in the country, delivering high quality services and support, and peaceful and well-managed neighbourhoods
- A smaller gap between the most and least disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that all of Rotherham's people can live in safe, healthy and vibrant communities
- No households living in homes that are poor in terms of energy efficiency

The Housing Strategy is updated every three years and residents and stakeholders were again consulted during 2015. This long-term vision is still relevant, however on the basis of feedback from residents we have added a fifth bullet point to the vision:

- A revitalised town centre with a new urban community.

We can add to this our shorter term ambitions which also reflect our recent consultation.

By 2019 we want to see:

- Increasing numbers of homes being built each year towards our target of 900
- Rotherham playing an active part in shaping housing in the Sheffield City Region
- The town centre being revitalised through new residential development
- Rotherham delivering new Starter Homes
- Enough social rented homes available for local people in housing need
- High levels of resident satisfaction
- Nobody trapped in housing that fails to meet their needs
- New high quality homes for private rent being developed
- Improved quality across the private rented sector
- Better, more joined up working between RMBC Housing, Adult Services and Children and Young People Services – and with health services and the voluntary / community sectors – on specialist housing
- Continuing to alleviate fuel poverty for our most vulnerable households



Delivery of the Housing Strategy's vision will contribute significantly towards the Council's overall corporate vision, which is as follows:

Rotherham is our home, where we come together as a community, where we seek to draw on our proud history to build a future we can all share. We value decency and dignity and seek to build a town where opportunity is extended to everyone, where people can grow, flourish and prosper, and where no one is left behind.

To achieve this as a council we must work in a modern, efficient way, to deliver sustainable services in partnership with our local neighbourhoods, looking outwards, yet focused relentlessly on the needs of our residents.

The Corporate Plan has four main priorities which the Housing Strategy is helping to address:

Corporate Plan 2016-18 priority	Example of how housing can help
Every child making the best start in life	Children require safe, warm homes to grow up in if they are to learn and fulfil their potential. Housing cuts across each of the themes identified to ensure Rotherham is a child-centred borough, for example: -We will consult with and engage children and young people on housing issues -We will work with the Early Help team to support families with children -Staff and partners will be trained on safeguarding and tackling child sexual exploitation so they can spot the signs and make referrals -We will increase and improve the accommodation available for children and young people
Every adult secure, responsible and empowered	Decent housing underpins positive physical and mental health and can help older people to remain in their own homes for longer, potentially reducing costs in health and social care services
A strong community in a clean, safe environment	Housing can have a significant impact on one's feeling of wellbeing, and sense of security and community. Strong regulation and enforcement to improve the quality of residential areas
Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future	The delivery of our housing growth plan will contribute significantly to the overall economic growth of Rotherham, by providing homes for people who will be attracted to work in Rotherham as well as meeting local need, and creating jobs and training opportunities

The Housing Strategy vision also links directly to Aim 5 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy: 'Rotherham has healthy, safe and sustainable communities and places'.



Key facts about housing in Rotherham

Rotherham

- Rotherham is a metropolitan borough within South Yorkshire, covering 110 square miles and has a mix of urban areas and villages - about 70% of the borough is rural.
- The town has a proud, rich industrial heritage and over recent years has attracted investment in new areas such as information technology, light engineering and advanced manufacturing.
- Rotherham has a central position within the Sheffield City Region (which consists of nine local authorities) and contains two of the largest residential development sites – Bassingthorpe Farm and Waverley.
- 38% of Rotherham's working population travel outside the borough for work.
- 20% of Rotherham's working population travel to Sheffield.
- 55% of people working in Rotherham live outside of the borough.

Population

- Rotherham has a steadily increasing population of around 260,100 as at June 2015.
- 21.7% of the population are aged 0-17 years, and 24.6% are aged 60+ years.
- The overall population of Rotherham is projected to increase by 2.5% between 2014 and 2021, and the number aged 85+ is projected to increase by 25% over the same period.
- 92% of the population of Rotherham is classified as White British.

Socio-economic profile

- Rotherham is ranked 52nd most deprived district in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, within the 16% most deprived. 20% of people live in the top 10% deprived areas in England.
- 68% of Rotherham's working age population are in work, and 12.4% are claiming out-of-work benefits, well above the national rate of 9.1%.
- Rotherham's unemployment rate fell from 11.3% in 2011/12 to 8.5% in 2014/15 but remains above the national average.
- Income levels are below national averages. The average weekly earnings in Rotherham in 2014 were £456.30 per week; below both the regional average of £479 and the national average of £520.80.
- Educational attainment in Rotherham at a secondary level has improved greatly over recent years, but there is much more room for improvement at primary level and participation in further and higher education continues to remain below the national average.



- Rotherham has average crime rates compared to sub-regional averages.
- The health of people in Rotherham is generally poorer than the English average which is influenced by people's lifestyles and a number of other wider factors such as deprivation and industrial legacy.

Evidence of Rotherham's housing requirements

In 2015 the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was published. The SHMA provides a comprehensive portrait of housing needs and trends across Rotherham and Sheffield and supports our Local Plan and Core Strategy. A significant part of the SHMA data derives from a household survey, which gained 1,751 responses. Focus groups were also held to examine views on town centre living, and specialist housing, in more detail.

The outcome of the SHMA indicated the overall housing requirement is for 900 (net) new dwellings per year. 10% of which would need to be 1 bed, 40% 2 bed, 50% 3 bed or more in size. Included in the 900 required are 237 (26%) new affordable homes, the rest would be delivered by the private sector. The 237 should consist of 170 dwellings for social rent and 67 intermediate tenures (i.e. shared or low cost ownership). The study indicates a requirement for a higher percentage of smaller 1 and 2 bed properties would be required for social rent properties.

The SHMA also identified a need to provide specialised housing for young care leavers, older people, disabled people and people with mental health issues, all of whose individual requirements may impact on their housing needs.

Housing facts and figures

- Rotherham contains approximately 108,300 households.
- 65.5% of properties are owner occupied, 21.5% are social housing and 12% are private rented.
- There are 20,763 council homes in Rotherham.
- There are around 4,700 eligible applicants on the Housing Register.
- The average number of bids for advertised council properties is 46.
- The number of Council homes sold via the Right to Buy has increased dramatically from only 17 in 2011/12 to 140 projected for 2015/6.
- There is low housing demand in some areas and an increasing housing affordability gap between the most and least deprived areas.
- Average housing density is 4 dwellings per hectare.
- In Rotherham the average house price is £138,255 (July 2015), significantly below the national average of £282,000.
- The average weekly rent in the private sector is £103 per week.
- The average weekly rent for social housing is £65 per week.
- In 2013, 9% of Rotherham's households were living in fuel poverty, and figures are highest within the private rented sector.



Challenges

Reduced resources

- Wider public spending cuts mean the Council has to operate with a much lower level of resources than in previous years.
- The July 2015 Budget introduced the social rent reduction of 1% per annum over four years. While some of our tenants will benefit from lower rents, given that over two thirds are in receipt of housing benefit, the main beneficiary will be the Treasury. The Council will actually lose around 4% of rental income per annum (compared to the previous formula rent) over the next four years, and this will necessitate a significant cutback of its Housing Revenue Account investment and growth ambition programmes.
- Whilst not all details have been published by Government to enable an accurate financial forecast of the impact of the various changes either recently made by Government or proposed, it is currently estimated that these changes will result in a loss of approximately £1bn of income to the Housing Revenue Account over the next 30 years.

Reducing social housing stock (which also reduces income / resources)

- The Housing and Planning Bill 2015 proposes several potential new policies, including the extension of the Right to Buy to housing associations meaning less social housing stock, and forced sale of high value local authority Council homes / a levy to pay for the housing association discounts.
- Other proposed policies such as fixed term tenancies (instead of the traditional 'lifetime' secure tenancies) and 'Pay to Stay' (whereby households earning over £30K will be required to pay higher rents) are likely to encourage more Right to Buy applications.
- The Government's Affordable Housing Programme is now focused on home ownership and Starter Homes, rather than social rented housing so there will be fewer new homes being built to replace the stock lost through Right to Buy. To put this in context, 51 new affordable homes were delivered during 2014/5 whereas 112 were sold through the Right to Buy.
- These changes could potentially have fundamental impacts on the way we deliver social housing in the future and this will be a key topic for debate over the next three years.

Welfare Reform

- The measures introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 continue to be implemented, and the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2014 further proposes:
 - Reduction of the benefits cap from £26,000 to £23,000.



- People aged 35 and under only able to claim Housing Benefit for private rented housing at the 'shared accommodation' rate.
- Automatic entitlement to the housing element of Universal Credit to 18-21 year olds will be removed, with some exceptions, from April 2017.
- These changes present significant challenges for many of our residents.
- They also make it more difficult for the Council to collect rent and reduce its overall rental income, adding further pressure on Housing Revenue Account business plan.

Demographic changes

- Like many areas Rotherham has an ageing population and our current housing offer falls short of what older people aspire towards. We need more high quality homes that are suitable for older people and more choice.
- We also need more accommodation that meets the needs of young people.
- We continue to see demographic changes in some of our more deprived neighbourhoods, some of which arise from transient populations.
- The latest Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD2015) show that deprivation in Rotherham has increased slightly over the past five years, with the borough now ranked 52nd most deprived district (53rd in 2010).
- However deprivation in the poorest 10% of the borough has increased significantly, and 20% of Rotherham's residents live within the 10% most deprived areas of England.

Opportunities

- Devolution of some housing powers to the Sheffield City Region to help deliver Government's housing growth ambitions, and the 'Northern Powerhouse'. Funding will be available to help us deliver growth.
- Government's focus on home ownership aligns with our local priorities and we have ambitions to be a 'vanguard' authority for the Starter Homes programme.
- We need to improve the housing development opportunities available in Rotherham's town centre to support the overall transformation of the town and we have the opportunity to do this through the Starter Homes programme.
- Continuing and increasing pressure on Council resources – collaboration and innovation is more important than ever to enable us to deliver on economic and housing growth ambitions. We already have strong partnerships in place.
- We need more effective integration of housing, health and social care, to help address the resource pressures on the NHS and adult social care arising from the ageing population – and we have already made a great start on this.
- The Local Government Association carried out a review of housing in summer 2015 and found this to be a good service; we have the people and skills in place to deliver against our Housing Strategy.



Residents' concerns

In producing this Strategy we have taken into account feedback from:

- Consultation carried out during 2012 on the previous Housing Strategy, much of which is still valid
- The results of the wide scale 'where do you want to live' survey carried out in 2012 which generated 3295 responses and provided a statistically representative sample
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015, part of which was a survey which generated 1751 responses and focus groups specifically looking at the town centre, and specialist housing
- An additional report produced by the University of Sheffield which combined Rotherham's and Sheffield's market assessments
- The 27 Commissioner roadshows of 2015 which led to the 'views from Rotherham' report and includes feedback from residents on housing issues
- Consultation carried out during 2015 on the new Housing Strategy
- Extensive consultation was carried out regarding Selective Licensing and over 1700 responses were received

Consultation was carried out with Rotherham residents, RMBC staff and a wide range of other partners and stakeholders, during autumn 2015. The main consultation methods were:

- Online survey
- Discussions at various groups and forums, and information distributed by email to wide range of groups and contact lists
- Strategic Housing Forum with partners and stakeholders
- Resident focus groups

The key messages arising from consultation can be summarised as follows:

- We need to prioritise housing for first time buyers
- More housing options are needed for older people
- Selective Licensing has had a positive effect in some areas and better regulation is generally needed for private rented housing
- The allocation system needs to be fair for all and while the poorest people must be prioritised, Council housing shouldn't only be for people on benefits
- The town centre needs to be improved particularly in terms of its housing offer
- The Council needs to be tough on antisocial behaviour



Themes

Looking at the challenges and opportunities facing Rotherham's housing offer, the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and feedback from our residents and stakeholders, we can summarise the key areas to focus on as follows:

- Increasing the number of homes – **housing growth**
- Ensuring affordable rented / **social housing** is available for those who can't afford or don't want to buy a home
- Improving quality in the **private rented sector**, the fastest growing tenure in Rotherham
- Increasing opportunities for first time buyers and other households seeking **affordable home ownership**
- Ensuring a wide range of **specialist housing** that is suitable for older people and other specific groups

These form the five themes of the Housing Strategy.

A section on each of these follows (after the 'resources' section), which sets out where we want to be and how we will get there, along with key performance measures. A summary action plan is attached as appendix 1.

Resources

National public spending reductions continue to affect the Council's overall resources and over the next three years, the Council will need to achieve savings of £41m, alongside the need to invest in children's social services, modernise adult social care, and ensure resources are available for other elements of the Council's improvement programme.

The delivery of this Housing Strategy contributes in many ways to the Council's overall financial position for example, for every new home built in Rotherham the Government pays a grant to the Council called the New Homes Bonus (although the Government is consulting on potential amendments to the scheme). Since the scheme started in 2011 the Council has received £13.8m in New Homes Bonus grant. New homes also bring additional Council Tax, jobs and economic activity.

New specialist housing will help to significantly reduce Adult and Children's Social Care expenditure as well as generating wider savings to Health Services. The Strategy will also contribute to wider economic improvements within the borough; helping to ensure we retain young working households and high income / high skill



individuals who choose to live in Rotherham, as there is an excellent residential offer.

As described in the introduction, the reduction of social housing rents will mean a major reduction of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the 30 year HRA Business Plan is being revised accordingly. Challenging decisions must be taken regarding investment priorities. Further new pressures on the HRA include a levy on Councils to pay for housing association Right to Buy discounts (we currently await details on how this will be applied), the increased income collection activity that will be required as a result of the implementation of Universal Credit in Rotherham and loss of stock through the Right to Buy initiative.

The Council has identified over 150 HRA land and property assets that are suitable for residential development and has a programme of releasing these sites to enable more residential development. We will deploy these assets to help deliver key elements of the Strategy, enabling more homes to be built, including specialist provision and affordable housing. Some of these sites will be sold to private individuals and private developers, who will build new homes for sale and or their own occupation. We have recently sold nine sites at auction and agreed the first phase of a major new residential development on Council land in Dalton in partnership with a private developer. The capital income from the sale of HRA land will enable the Council to support future strategic housing development priorities.

It is more important than ever that we find new ways of working with the private sector to lever in additional resources. An example of this is the Council has recently tendered a residential development opportunity to work on seven sites delivering over 200 new homes. We are asking developers to submit proposals to build new homes on a mix of good and challenging sites. The additional resources created on the better sites will be used to build on the more challenging ones, ensuring we don't just build on the best sites.

The £900m given to the Sheffield City Region by Government as part of the Devolution Deal to grow the economy and create 70,000 new jobs will also be used to deliver more new homes. The Council is working with neighbouring local authorities and the Home and Communities Agency to prioritise how these resources are used to help deliver housing growth and fit our local circumstances. Resourcing this Strategy is not just about public funding and utilising our land, it is equally important there is strong and effective partnership working with stakeholders and partners. This will help maximise resources to meet our shared strategic objectives. The Council co-ordinates a Strategic Housing Forum which meets quarterly to stimulate collaborative working and alignment with this Strategy.



Theme 1: Housing growth

Housing growth - current position

The average number of new homes built per annum has been 593 over the past five years, but the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2015 tells us we need at least 900 new homes per annum including 25% affordable housing.

Rotherham is in a good position to achieve this. We have available land, strong links with other local authorities across the City Region, affordable market values, and an excellent track record of delivery (for example often out-performing other local authorities on delivering social housing). Although we will not be able to increase building rates to 900+ homes per annum overnight, with the right interventions we will see more homes built year on year until we reach our target.

Housing growth - where we want to be in three years

We want to be in a position where at least 900 new homes are being built each year, delivering the following outcomes:

- Increased housing choice and supply, including a new town centre residential offer
- Housing that meets the current and future needs of all our communities
- Positive contribution to the local economy
- Opportunities for local training, skills and employment
- Key contribution to the regeneration of Rotherham
- Improved energy efficiency across the housing stock, reducing fuel poverty
- Increased income via New Homes Bonus (subject to revisions to the scheme currently being consulted on by government) and Council Tax to support Council services
- Strong partnerships that maximise new opportunities
- A more diverse local construction industry through innovation and creative solutions
- Town centre revitalised through new residential development
- Playing an active role in delivering the Government's new Starter Homes Programme

Housing growth - how we will get there

The vast majority of these homes will be delivered by the private sector but the Council can influence the number, type and location of homes. The Council's role is that of a Housing Delivery Enabler.



Rotherham Council's strategic enabling role:

- Set the overall vision and ambition for housing growth in Rotherham
- Use our comprehensive housing intelligence data to ensure new provision meets current and future housing need, including
 - Housing that is suitable for older people
 - One and two bedroom homes to meet the needs of our increasing number of single person households
 - 'Aspirational' housing to reflect the range of new jobs being created in Rotherham
 - Housing to attract and retain young people – as the SHMA has shown this group are more likely to migrate to Sheffield
- Create opportunities by bringing public land forward
- Provide support and information and advice to the private sector to assist them to develop housing
- Work in partnership and embrace new ways of delivering housing including modern manufacturing methods
- Achieve high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency
- Step in where market failure exists
- Work with the Homes and Communities Agency and at the Sheffield City Region level to maximise opportunities to access funding and affordable borrowing capacity
- Work with colleagues and partners to ensure the necessary infrastructure requirements are understood and implemented, including transport and highways, school places, health / pharmaceutical services and community safety
- Actively encourage small local builders as well as larger organisations, to create more diversity and competition within Rotherham's construction industry and maximise the positive impact on the local economy.

Housing growth - key actions for the Council over the next three years

- a. We will make the best possible use of land for residential development – from small garage in-fill sites through to large-scale new communities at Waverley and Bassingthorpe. Council-owned sites and assets will be released for either custom / self-build, affordable and / or specialist housing, or sale on the open market to generate resources to fund other new build projects.
- b. We will explore the possibility of setting up a Housing Company to help accelerate the rate of build and diversify tenure.



- c. Improving the town centre is a crucial part of transforming Rotherham, and having the right housing offer can make a big difference. We will develop and launch a prospectus to attract developers into the town centre, and enable residential zones identified in the Town Centre Masterplan to be developed.

Housing growth – measuring our success

Indicator	2014/15 (actual)	2015/16 (projection)	2016/17 (target)	2017/18 (target)	2018/19 (target)
Number of new homes delivered during year	633	665	731	804	885
Number of new homes in the town centre delivered during year	0	0	tbc	50	100
Number of homes in Waverley during year	120	120	120	120	120
Number of homes in Bassingthorpe during year	0	0	0	0	60



Theme 2: Social housing

Social housing - current position

Over one fifth of Rotherham's households live in social housing, i.e. rented from the Council or a housing association, and there are almost 4,800 people on the housing register. Social housing is in high demand (Council properties attracted on average 46 bids per property during 2015), for the following reasons:

- Over 99% of our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Higher energy efficiency ratings than the private rented sector
- Traditionally let on the basis of secure permanent tenancies
- We are a trusted landlord
- Low rents
- Right to Buy opportunity

Residents agree that social housing should be aimed first and foremost at the most vulnerable in Rotherham, and the Allocations Policy ensures these are prioritised. However there is a commonly expressed view that 'hard-working' low and medium income families should also be allowed the opportunity to benefit from social housing, which can function as a springboard to better employment or home ownership opportunities.

In September 2015, the Policy was revised to make a number of Council homes available to households in a new Band 4 (not in housing need but must have been living and / or working in Rotherham for at least three years or with a direct family member who has been living in Rotherham for the last three years). Homes that have not been bid for by households in housing need, fall into this category.

In the past we have delivered well on new social housing in Rotherham, often out-performing other local authorities in the region. The build rate has slowed and the new Affordable Housing Programme will see a dramatic reduction in the numbers of new social rented homes, in favour of low cost home ownership and starter homes. Also, the social rent reduction introduced in the July 2015 budget has necessitated a significant revision of the HRA Business Plan (reducing capital resources available for new homes).

The Council has a good understanding of its customer base and is committed to providing customer centric services. Opportunities to get involved are set out in the Tenant Involvement Strategy and RotherFed delivers a wide range of community engagement initiatives on the Council's behalf.



Key challenges

- Less grant and lower rates to build new affordable rented housing
- A cut in the level of capital investment in existing social housing
- Reduced number of affordable homes delivered on new private housing developments
- More specialist housing required
- Harder to collect rent due to changes to welfare system and reduced income from rent
- More Right to Buy sales
- Fixed term tenancies

Key opportunities

- Strong demand for social housing
- Low rent levels
- Decent quality housing stock
- Borrowing headroom and land availability for new homes
- Good understanding of our customer base and high satisfaction levels

Social housing - where we want to be in three years

- To be able to continue to provide social homes for local people in housing need.
- To continue to improve the quality of our social housing through investment, building or acquiring new stock
- High levels of customer satisfaction.
- Offering new forms of tenure to our customers.
- Nobody to be trapped in housing that fails to meet their needs.

Social housing - how we will get there

Ensuring we can provide homes for people in housing need

In order to ensure we can continue to provide homes for people in housing need, it is essential that we have clear and fair policies to govern who can / should access social housing, and on what basis.

It is anticipated that as the 2015 Housing and Planning Bill passes into law, all new Council tenancies will become fixed-term secure tenancies. The Council will develop a detailed policy (Strategic Tenancy Policy) and procedures to accompany the new Tenancy Agreement, to ensure this is communicated clearly, and implemented fairly and consistently.



We will continue to improve the data we hold about our current and future tenants, to build a comprehensive profile of our customers that we can use to analyse the impact of our policies and inform future policy changes.

New social housing

The Council will review its affordable housing policy to ensure it works effectively following the proposed changes to national planning policy. The Council will also work in partnership with developers to find innovative ways of enabling new social housing to be built.

It is critical that we ensure the new affordable rented housing stock is of the right type, tenure and location. Both evidence and residents tell us that specialist and supported housing needs to be prioritised and we will work with housing associations and developers to increase the supply of specialist social housing in Rotherham.

As described in the Housing Growth chapter we will explore alternative models for delivering new housing including the potential establishment of a Housing Company, which could be used for new Council-owned affordable housing to offer a higher degree of flexibility around tenure.

The Right to Buy

The Right to Buy provides tenants with a significant discount on the value of their home, and we will continue to deliver excellent home ownership services to help people access this opportunity. However in order to ensure the sustainability of our social housing stock for future generations, and to help prevent people from entering into an arrangement without a full understanding of the financial implications, we will introduce new measures to prevent Right to Buy fraud, including a pilot whereby applicants must attend a face to face interview.

We will review the use of Right to Buy capital receipts and continue where possible to invest these in replacement housing, and we will monitor the stock lost through the Right to Buy. Where this leaves gaps in provision, we will ensure this is reflected in the housing growth programme.

We will work in partnership with housing associations to help shape their locally determined Right to Buy schemes, including providing strategic guidance on stock replacement. Finally, we will improve the advice and marketing we provide for alternative affordable home ownership schemes.



Maintaining high standards across our existing social housing stock

We want to ensure that the housing we provide is of the highest quality. It is essential that as Rotherham's social housing stock shrinks, and our capacity to replace it is reduced, we continue to invest in our stock through delivery of a robust Asset Management Plan. This exists as a separate document, but a summary of our key priorities for asset management follows:

- Implementing a new ICT system to improve data and management information
- Improving the energy efficiency of our stock to help reduce fuel poverty
- Implementing measures to reduce damp and condensation
- Delivering environmental improvements
- Remodelling stock that is unsustainable. For example converting houses into bedsits
- Bringing empty properties back into use as quickly as possible
- We will continue to engage with tenants and residents to ensure our investment programmes reflect their priorities
- This runs alongside our robust neighbourhood and tenancy management processes to ensure estates are safe and peaceful

We have developed a stock investment decision-making protocol to ensure we take a strategic and prudent approach to housing stock that may no longer be suitable for social housing due, for example, to requiring high levels of investment or being located in an area where there is already an over-supply of social housing. We will share this protocol with housing associations and engage in early discussion where housing associations wish to return leased RMBC properties back to the Council.

Opportunities for people to move when they want or need to

We want to support and encourage people to:

- Move out of homes that are not suitable for their needs
- Move 'onwards and upwards' out of the rental market, when their circumstances and intentions allow
- Move closer to employment, education or training opportunities, thereby helping to prevent people from becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Ways in which we will provide this support and encouragement:

- Support through the downsizing policy and service
- Delivery of more housing that is suitable for the needs of older people, and households with a disabled family member



- Advertising and administering the mutual exchange policy
- Marketing affordable home ownership opportunities
- Providing support for families to engage in training and employment via the Early Help Service

While encouraging mobility may appear to be at odds with the concept of building strong, sustainable communities, it is necessary, in order to adapt to changing national policy and a reducing social housing stock, and in some cases to help people into work. We will use our strategic influence to strengthen communities in other ways, for example:

- Ensuring a mix of housing type and tenure in areas through our Housing Growth Plan
- Strong tenancy management, aided by our new Tenancy Agreement
- Liaising with support services such as Early Help to ensure that tenancies are sustained and children and families address anti-social behaviour
- Strengthening community engagement and tenant involvement
- Ongoing delivery of our Prevention of Homelessness Action Plan
- Providing advice and support to tenants facing financial difficulties and fuel poverty

Social housing – key actions for the Council over the next three years

- a. Develop a clear understanding of the future role of social housing in Rotherham in light of national policy changes
- b. Adapt our 30 year HRA Business Plan to reflect reduced income and future capital priorities
- c. We will develop a new Strategic Tenancy Policy and procedures to accompany the new Tenancy Agreement
- d. We will work in partnership with housing associations to help shape their locally determined Right to Buy schemes, including providing strategic guidance on stock replacement.
- e. We will remodel some of our social housing stock to reflect the need for more one bedroom homes and more specialist housing.



Social housing – measuring our success

Indicator	2014/15 (actual)	2015/16 (projection)	2016/17 (target)	2017/18 (target)	2018/19 (target)
Overall social housing stock (Council and housing associations)	25718	25700			
Number of new social rented homes built during the year	49	77	60	40	30
Number of homes sold through the Right to Buy	112	140	170	200	230
Number of people on the housing register	5,371	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of homes allocated to people in 'band 4' (not in housing need) on the housing register	21	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of Council housing stock that is non-decent	0.65%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Average re-let time for Council properties	22.41	37.45*	22 days	21 days	20 days
Percentage of repairs to Council properties carried out right first time	98.51%	95.86%	96%	97%	98%



Theme 3: Private rented sector

Private rented sector – current position

12% of Rotherham' homes are privately rented (the proportion doubled between 2001 and 2011) and this is the fastest growing tenure in the Borough. Various diverse household types live in the private rented sector (PRS) and demand will only increase further as the borough's social housing stock decreases and the cost of buying a home increases. These people are those who:

- Can't access social rented housing
- Are saving or can't afford to buy a home
- Haven't yet settled or who prefer the flexibility of the PRS
- Want to share a home for social or financial reasons

The needs of these tenants are broadly the same – good quality, energy efficient homes at a fair and affordable rent level, well-managed, safe and with a degree of certainty that the property will be available long-term.

The Council is improving the overall quality of the sector through Selective Licensing. This was introduced in 2015 in five designated areas of the borough (Dinnington, Eastwood, Maltby and Masbrough) and is already making improvements.

Fuel poverty is also a key issue, particularly in the older pre-1919 private rented stock although targeted external insulation improvements to these properties in recent years has improved the thermal comfort of many homes in areas such as Ferham, Eastwood and Dinnington.

Empty private sector homes are an issue in specific neighbourhoods where void levels are above our borough average of 3.27%. In neighbourhoods such as Little London in Maltby we have experienced void levels of up to 30%, which is requiring targeted intervention with the private landlords and community.

Private rented sector – where we want to be in three years

- New high quality homes for private rent being developed
- Improved quality across the private rented sector
- Reduced fuel poverty
- Better communication and engagement with private landlords
- Helping private landlords to provide homes that meet the needs of particular groups



- Tougher enforcement for those landlords who do not meet their statutory responsibilities

Private rented sector – how we will get there

Increasing supply

Through delivery of the interventions set out in the Council's Empty Property Policy and Action Plan, significant numbers of long-term empty properties can be brought back into use as private rented accommodation. For example empty property owners are offered help by the Council towards providing PRS properties through tenancy intervention services.

The Council in its strategic enabling role can provide developers and housing associations with information about the need for more market rent housing, including high-end executive accommodation, and facilitate the inclusion of market rent housing in new large scale communities such as the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District.

Private Sector Housing Enforcement

Inspections of private rented properties under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 are made in response to complaints about housing standards or where the Council identifies property where there may be problems with housing health and safety. These inspections and Housing Health and Safety assessments can result in improvement requirements where there are serious defects causing Category 1 or 2 hazards, and are enforced through enforcement notices of various types. A financial charge can be levied to pay for the enforcement notices in most cases. Failing to comply with these notices or other housing standard requirements is a criminal offence, as is the failure to license a relevant House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) or a house within a Selective Licensing area.

Mandatory HMO Licensing and Selective Licensing of other houses

The borough has a small number of licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation where routine monitoring ensures they are safe to live in and that they are being managed appropriately.

Selective Licensing has also been implemented in five areas to address symptoms of low housing demand which make these neighbourhoods less desirable for people to move into and stay, making the community their home. Landlord take-up has generally been positive with the first year of the scheme likely to reach its target of licensing 70% of licensable property, and robust enforcement in place. However, detailed analysis is required of the outcomes of inspections and subsequent



improvements, as well as demographic data over the life of the scheme, to measure the impact of Licensing on the quality of the sector in these areas. We will continue to monitor this and if evidence suggests Selective Licensing has brought about improvements, consideration will be given to rolling this out in other areas (providing the strict criteria for Selective Licensing implementation can be met).

PRS for older people

Relatively low numbers of older people rent privately, generally preferring to rent from the Council, but limited bungalow stock and an ageing population mean that in addition to the need for more new housing to be built that is suitable for older people, the Council also needs to encourage this group to consider alternative options such as quality provision within the PRS. Some of the reasons older people may be reluctant to consider renting privately are lack of security and concern that it may not be possible to install aids and adaptations to enable them to continue living independently. It would be beneficial to have trusted private landlords in Rotherham who can offer a specialist service to older tenants (including, for example, long terms tenancies and agreement to adaptations), and the Council will play its part by stimulating the market and providing information to landlords about this gap in provision.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO)

Consultation has taken place and Government seeks to extend the scope of mandatory licensing for HMOs, and set out proposals to streamline the HMO licensing process. Consultation closed in December 2015 and findings will be delivered during 2016.

It is recognised that houses in multiple occupation (HMO) can sometimes offer the only affordable housing option to some people, particularly young people who have been affected by welfare reform. The Council will monitor any potential increase in this sector and work with private landlords and housing association partners to ensure the highest quality of HMOs.

Fuel poverty

The Council will continue to work with partners to access external funding to improve the energy efficiency of the PRS as fuel poverty levels continue to be the highest in this sector. However a number of measures have already been taken and in 2013, 9% of Rotherham's households were living in fuel poverty which is better than the England average and represents a significant improvement on previous levels.



Private rented sector – key actions over the next three years

- a. We will work with the owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use as private rented homes
- b. We will work with landlords to provide a better private rented offer for older people.
- c. We will thoroughly evaluate the success of our current Selective Licensing schemes and consider extending to other areas.

Private rented sector – measuring our success

Indicator	2014/15 (actual)	2015/16 (projection)	2016/17 (target)	2017/18 (target)	2018/19 (target)
Number of formerly long-term empty properties in the private sector that we have brought back into use as a direct result of Council intervention	N/A	65	90	90	100
Percentage of eligible properties which have applied for a licence, within Selective Licensing areas	N/A	70%	85%	90%	tbc
Percentage of people living in fuel poverty in the private rented sector	9%	8.52%	8.43%	8.35%	8.27%



Theme 4: Affordable home ownership

Affordable home ownership – current position

Part of a successful, well-functioning housing market is access to different house types within a range of affordability brackets and tenures, therefore affordable home ownership is an essential part of the market.

Nationally, home ownership has seen a steep rise over the past 60 years – from 32% in 1952 to 63% (14.8 million) in 2014 – fuelled by favourable economic trends and sustained by Government policies, and the desire for home ownership remains strong in Rotherham. 65% of Rotherham's households are home owners, and 69% would like to own the next home they move to.

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for first time buyers to afford to buy a home due to low income levels, difficulties in securing mortgage finance, an increasing gap between income and house prices and the supply of affordable housing. Saving for a deposit and the cost of moving are also key factors for people wishing to buy a home. 54% of people who completed our housing strategy consultation survey thought first time buyers need help.

There are a number of schemes which aim to assist people to buy their own home, in addition to the Right to Buy:

- The Help to Buy scheme was launched by the Government in April 2013 to assist both first time buyers and homeowners on the property ladder, but is restricted to new build homes. The scheme allows applicants to apply for assistance through an equity loan or mortgage guarantee. From the launch of the scheme 429 Rotherham residents have been assisted with equity loan, 352 being first time buyers.
- Shared ownership properties are usually available through housing associations. This scheme allows people to buy a share of a property while paying rent on the remaining share. Shared ownership is available to people who cannot typically afford to buy a house on the open market and earning £60,000 or less.
- The new Starter Homes initiative is due to launch in 2016 and will help first time buyers buy new build properties with a 20% deposit.

Another route into home ownership is custom or self-build, whereby people are able to purchase a plot of land from the Council to build or direct the build of their own home. While this may not technically constitute 'affordable housing', it can offer a great alternative for people who require a specific design or location. Prospective applicants are directed by Key Choices to join the Council's Custom Build Register.



Affordable home ownership – where we want to be in three years

Central Government has focused attention and resources on affordable home ownership and starter homes and the Council needs to play a stronger role in promoting the various opportunities available.

We want to ensure a wide range of opportunities are available for people who want to own their home, and that people understand the various options.

We want people who work in Rotherham to choose to live here too, and also for people who work elsewhere in the region to choose Rotherham as a great place to buy a home.

We want to use affordable home ownership to stimulate a new residential offer in our town centre.

Affordable home ownership – how we will get there

We will promote the various opportunities available in Rotherham.

A further opportunity currently being explored in Rotherham is a 'rent-to-buy' product whereby people are supported (via a rent savings scheme) to purchase the property they are privately renting.

In addition to the various national agencies that are responsible for promoting these schemes (Help to Buy NEYH, Plumlife and My4Walls), it is important that clear information is provided by the Council's Key Choices advice service, and the level of communications and publicity will be increased from 2016.

Affordable home ownership – key actions for the Council over the next three years

- a. Improve marketing and communication of affordable home ownership opportunities in Rotherham
- b. Work in partnership with an investor / developer to deliver Rent to Buy housing in Rotherham
- c. Seek to become a 'Vanguard authority' for the Starter Homes programme.



Affordable home ownership – measuring our success

Indicator	2014/15 (actual)	2015/16 (projection)	2016/17 (target)	2017/18 (target)	2018/19 (target)
Number of new starter homes delivered in year	112	140	150-160	180-190	200-210
Number of shared ownership homes delivered in year	2	8	10	10	10
Number of Help to Buy homes delivered in year					

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Theme 5: Specialist housing

Specialist housing – current position

We know that we need more and better quality housing options for older people and have produced an Older People Housing Delivery Plan following consultation with residents and partners. In the past we have delivered some great older people housing schemes through partnership working, for example extra care housing and disabled person bungalows. The Plan recognises that we need a more proactive and evidence-based approach to specialist housing, and to get better at combining the skills, expertise and data held by the various teams and organisations involved in providing specialist accommodation.

The same approach needs to be applied to other types of specialist housing, particularly:

- People with dementia
- Adults with learning disabilities
- Adults with mental health conditions
- Adults with autism
- Adults with complex needs

We also have clear plans in place for improving and increasing accommodation for children and young people.

Specialist housing – where we want to be in three years

We know that we need better, more joined up working between RMBC Housing, Adult Services and Children and Young People Services – and with health services and the voluntary / community sectors - to ensure we deliver the right specialist housing in Rotherham.

We also want:

- To improve people's health and wellbeing and enable more people to remain living independently in their own homes
- To reduce isolation
- To contain expenditure within the context of increasing demand on services.



Specialist housing – how we will get there

Housing for older people

The Older People Delivery Plan has four objectives and the key actions under each are summarised below:

Objective 1: Ensure older people have access to excellent information and advice about housing options

- Develop new guide to independent living – setting out all housing options for older people in addition to offering advice and information
- Stimulate and diversify the advice market, working with voluntary / community sector organisations

Objective 2: Develop and maintain a clear understanding of the current and future housing needs of older people in Rotherham

- Better co-ordination of data between NHS, Adult Services and Housing to plan for new specialist housing

Objective 3: Support older people to live independently for as long as they choose

- Improve and increase the use of assistive technology
- Deliver a pilot on integrating workforces and assets in a specific area to create a 'health village' service offer without people having to move from their homes
- Improve hospital discharge processes and develop new 'step-down' accommodation to enable people to leave hospital and get ready for a return to independent living

Objective 4: Ensure a range of homes are available that are suitable for older people

- Through the Council's strategic housing enabling role – ensure homes suitable for older people are built in the right locations
- Identify alternative funding opportunities for specialist housing
- Deliver more extra care housing in the south and central areas of Rotherham

Specialist accommodation for children and young people

The Council has a Corporate Parenting role and is committed to ensuring excellent housing is available for our vulnerable young people including residential care, leaving care, foster parents and a leaving care drop-in facility.



Our key priorities for specialist young people's accommodation are:

- Better residential care homes
- Transition accommodation for children moving on from care
- Provision of local accommodation options for homeless young people

Specialist / supported housing for other groups

A new partnership forum will be created in early 2016 to look at specialist housing needs for the following groups:

- Adults with learning disabilities
- Adults with mental health conditions
- Adults with autism
- Adults with complex needs
- Households with a disabled adult or child(ren)

Specialist housing – key actions for the Council over the next three years

- a. Deliver all actions within the Older People Housing Delivery Plan
- b. Ensure delivery of accommodation for children and young people identified in the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children.
- c. Develop a clear programme of specialist housing for other groups and ensure alignment with the Housing Growth Plan.

Specialist housing – measuring our success

Indicator	2014/15 (actual)	2015/16 (projection)	2016/17 (target)	2017/18 (target)	2018/19 (target)
Number of extra care placements for older people (including existing)	115	115	115	130	140
Number of new specialist housing units (all types)					



Governance

Progress made with delivering the Housing Strategy will be monitored via the Strategic Housing Forum, which meets quarterly and whose membership includes representatives from housing associations, health services, the Police, voluntary and community organisations and various Council services involved in housing. Reports will be provided regularly to the Cabinet Member for Housing and be provided to the Business Growth Board of the Rotherham Together Partnership upon request.

Other key documents (insert hyperlinks in published document)

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Housing Growth Plan
- Economic Growth Plan 2015 – 2025
- Sheffield City Region Plan
- Rotherham Town Centre Masterplan (supplementary planning document January 2016, Arup)
- Allocations Policy
- Strategic Tenancy Policy
- Prevention of Homelessness Strategy
- Tenant Involvement Strategy
- Empty Homes Policy and Action Plan (private sector)
- General Enforcement Policy
- Older People Housing Delivery Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children.

Contact Details

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Appendix 1: Action plan

Chapter	Key actions	Lead team(s)	Expected delivery date	Current position
Housing growth	Release Council-owned sites and assets for residential development as per detailed housing growth plan	Housing Development Team	Ongoing	
	Explore possibility of setting up a Housing Company to help accelerate the rate of build and diversify tenure	Housing Development Team	Dec 16	
	Develop and launch a prospectus to attract developers into the town centre	Housing Development Team	Dec 16	
Social housing	Develop a clear understanding of the future role of social housing in Rotherham in light of national policy changes	Strategic Housing Team	Dec 17	
	Adapt our 30 year HRA Business Plan to reflect reduced income and future capital priorities	Housing Income Team / Investment Team	Aug 16	
	Develop a new Strategic Tenancy Policy and procedures to accompany the new Tenancy Agreement	Strategic Housing Team	July 16	
	Work in partnership with housing associations to help shape their locally determined Right to Buy schemes	Strategic Housing Team / Housing Development Team	Dec 16	
	Remodel some of our social housing stock to reflect the need for more one bedroom and specialist homes	Strategic Housing Team / Investment Team	Ongoing	
Private rented housing	We will work with the owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use as private rented homes	Strategic Housing Team	Ongoing	
	Work with landlords to provide a better private rented offer for older people	Strategic Housing Team	July 17	
	Evaluate the success of our current Selective Licensing schemes and consider extending to other areas	Strategic Housing Team / Community Protection	March 17	
Affordable home ownership	Improve marketing and communication of affordable home ownership opportunities in Rotherham	Strategic Housing Team / Key Choices	Oct 16	
	Work in partnership with an investor / developer to deliver Rent to Buy housing in Rotherham	Strategic Housing Team / Housing Development Team	Dec 16	
	Seek to become a 'Vanguard authority' for the Starter Homes programme	Housing Development Team	July 16	

Chapter	Key actions	Lead team(s)	Expected delivery date	Current position
Specialist housing	Deliver all actions within the Older People Housing Delivery Plan	Strategic Housing / Adult Services / Housing Development	Dec 18	
	Ensure delivery of accommodation for children and young people identified in the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children	Strategic Housing / CYPS Commissioning / Housing Development	Ongoing	
	Develop a clear programme of specialist housing for other groups and ensure alignment with the Housing Growth Plan	Strategic Housing	March 17	

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