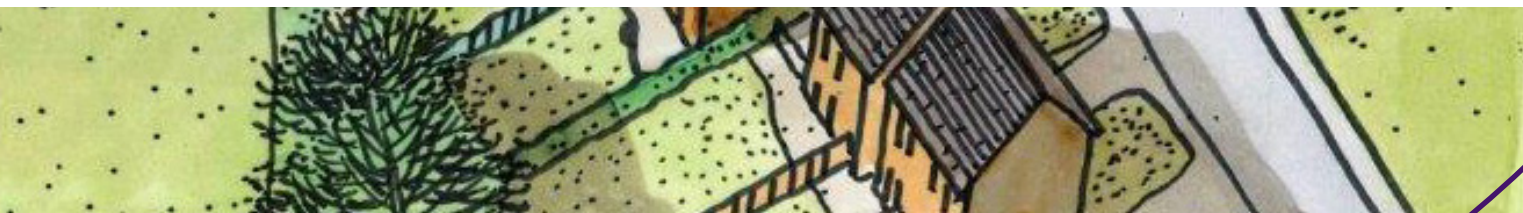




# **Housing Strategy** 2016 - 2021

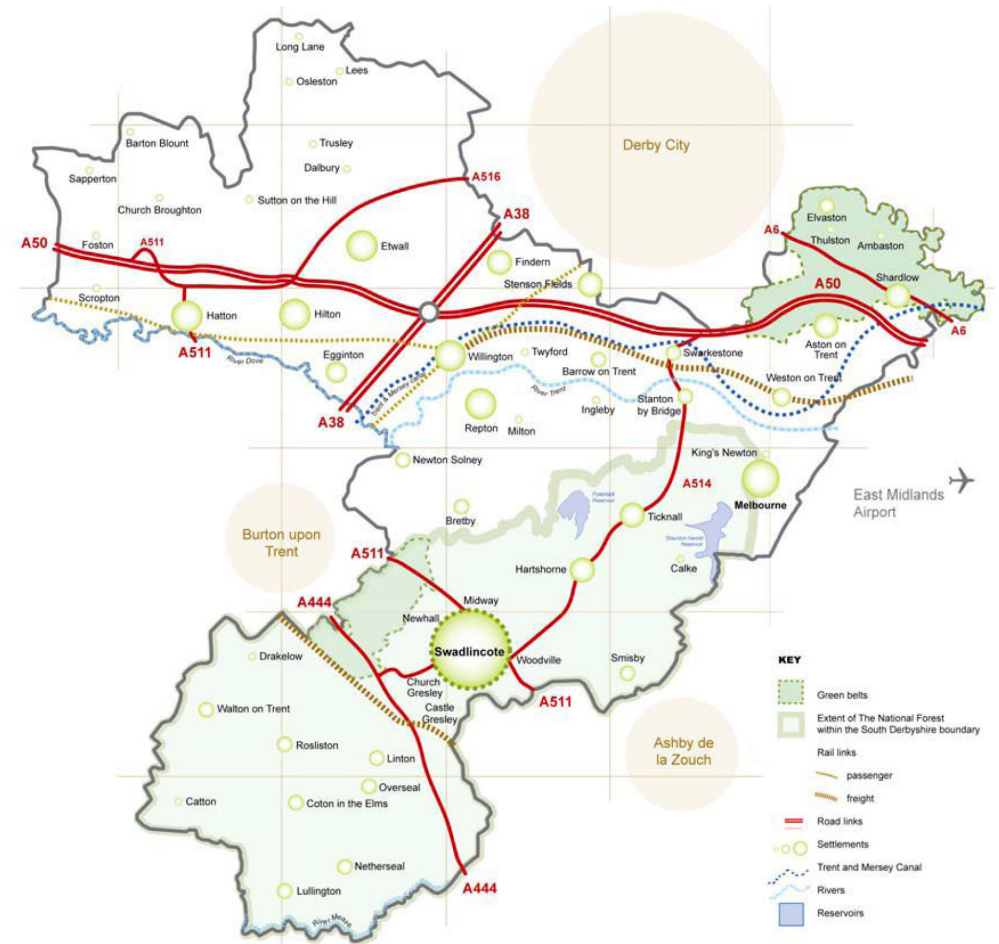


**South  
Derbyshire**  
District Council



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# Executive summary

## Introduction

Our Housing Strategy for 2016 - 2021 describes how the Council intends to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our residents. It identifies the challenges we face as a Council and focuses on ensuring the delivery of new homes and housing services over the next five years in the context of a fast changing local housing market and a challenging economic climate.

The Housing Strategy contributes towards the Council's wider strategic aims and priorities and as such it needs to take account of key national, sub regional and local strategies. The Council has a lead role in:

- Assessing and planning for the current and future housing needs of the District's population;
- Encouraging a supply of new homes to be built across all tenures;
- Supporting the local economy by having the right number of homes of the right tenure and price for our growing community;
- Making best use of existing housing stock;
- Improving poor housing conditions and thereby alleviating health problems associated with sub-standard housing;
- Promoting housing-related support services; and
- Working with a range of partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for local people.

Our three key strategic aims for our Housing Strategy 2016-21 are:

- Improving access to and supply of housing
- Well maintained, safer, greener homes
- Enabling people to live independently.

## Key statistics



## Foreword

We are delighted to introduce South Derbyshire District Council's Housing Strategy 2016-2021, which sets out our long term housing vision for the District.

This Housing Strategy has been developed at a time when the local housing market is changing significantly. Our Housing Strategy sets out how we intend to achieve our strategic aims through a variety of projects and initiatives in partnership with others.

Although we are facing new challenges, the Council is now able to explore new ways of working as a result of the Localism Act 2011 which has introduced a new financial structure for council housing and greater freedoms for councils to shape services to meet local housing needs.

A key aspiration of the Council is that we do all we can to help alleviate the excess demand for affordable housing. We have recently reviewed our housing register and it currently stands at just over 1,000 families.

Our aspiration is to utilise whatever resources we can to build, or facilitate others to build, to meet that demand and alleviate the unsatisfactory living conditions of those on the waiting list.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed towards our new Housing Strategy and look forward to working with our partners to ensure the delivery of more affordable homes and better housing services across the District.



Councillor Jim Hewlett  
Chair of Housing and Community Services Committee



# Our vision for South Derbyshire

“making South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit”

The vision for the District is set out within the overarching Corporate Plan. We want our District to be recognised as a successful place where people and communities want to do well, where they take up new ideas and trends but also celebrate history, heritage and local identity. It will be a district where people will want to invest, work and enjoy life. We will do this by building on the skills and ambition of our varied and growing population, providing decent affordable homes, and by making the most of our location. In more detail we aim:

## To strengthen South Derbyshire's economic position within a clean and sustainable environment by:

- Developing economic and employment opportunities within the District
- Increasing recycling resulting in less waste being sent to land fill
- Sustainable development.

## To deliver a range of affordable and decent housing options, within safe and clean neighbourhoods by:

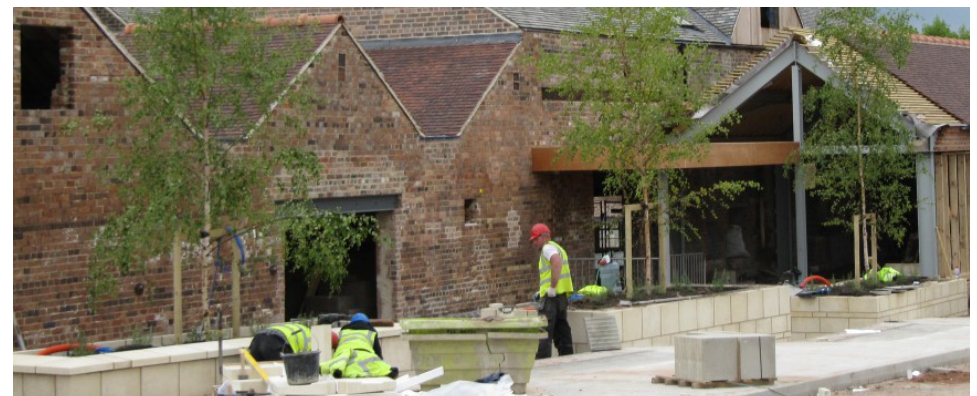
- Delivering a range of housing provision services that address community requirements
- Safer communities.

## To improve the health and well-being of our communities and residents by:

- Delivering community based recreational and cultural activities that promote a healthier life style
- Helping the community to reduce its environmental impact.

## To deliver Value for Money by:

- Cutting costs not services
- Ensuring we are financially resilient while maintaining a sustainable financial base
- Strong leadership and robust governance
- An improved customer experience.



This Strategy describes how we will contribute to achieving the vision and priorities. In particular we will focus on three housing strategic aims:

### **1. Improving access to and supply of housing**

- Ensure an increasing supply of good quality new homes of all tenures to contribute to meeting the growing need for housing in South Derbyshire which supports economic growth
- Increase the supply of affordable homes and ensure the right mix to encourage mixed communities and discourage exclusion
- Unlock the potential of empty homes and minimise voids
- Make the best use of existing housing stock

### **2. Well maintained, safer, greener homes**

- Ensure decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector
- Support the growing private rented sector
- Reduce fuel poverty
- Improve the condition and energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock
- Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on our estates

### **3. Helping people to live independently**

- Protect and support vulnerable individuals to improve their quality of life and decrease exclusion
- Realise the potential of the homes we already have in providing housing solutions for those with more complex needs
- Provide excellent advice, information and access to services
- Prevent homelessness through high quality advice and assistance

- Ensure that accommodation and services provided for elderly people remains relevant and responsive to their needs
- Work with those most affected by welfare reform

### **How we have developed this Housing Strategy**

The Council consults regularly on developing its strategic approach with tenants, residents and partner organisations. In developing this strategy, the outcome of other consultations have also been considered. This includes the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, Housing Asset Management Strategy, Empty Homes Strategy and the Private Sector Renewal Policy.

Over the past year we have been working with key stakeholders, including customers and elected members in developing this strategy. This includes a consultation event held in August 2015 with stakeholders to specifically challenge the key issues identified by our research and to set the strategic housing direction for the district for the next five years. Over 30 delegates heard about the changing housing market and the challenges facing people looking for a home of their own. They had the opportunity during the workshops to highlight the key issues facing housing and housing services.

Reports have been taken to the Council's Housing and Community Services Committee on our approach to the Housing Strategy 2016-2021 throughout 2015-2016, and which have included detailed reports on the overarching strategic objectives and priorities of the strategy.

The draft Strategy was placed on the Council's website and via social media outlets inviting feedback on the draft Strategy.



## How we will make sure our Strategy is a success

The Housing Strategy Action Plan 2016-21 will be monitored and updated on a regular basis to ensure that it remains responsive to changes in the local housing market and that the objectives are successfully delivered.

We will report on progress, emerging issues and trends within the changing housing market through the Housing and Community

Services Committee and existing established stakeholder forums. External stakeholders have been involved in developing the Strategy and Action Plan and progress will be reported to all relevant parties. When required Task and Finish groups will be created to help deliver the relevant elements of the Action Plan.

We will share information on a regular basis, particularly in relation to matters which may affect the delivery of this Housing Strategy and/or housing needs.

## South Derbyshire's changing housing market

### And the Key Challenges

Since our last Housing Strategy was published in 2009, the local housing market has changed significantly. Owner occupation is in decline (6% from 2001 - 2011) and the private rented sector is booming with a 100% increase in 10 years. At the same time housing need is rising and more of our customers are vulnerable and have complex needs.

Here is a summary of the evidence that has helped us to identify the main challenges we have in the District.

### Our Changing Community

- The population of South Derbyshire is increasing. It has grown by some 15.8% between 2001 and 2011, making it the second fastest growing local authority in the East Midlands (Leicester City 16.7%). In 2012 the District's population was 94,611. The population is expected to increase to approximately 123,000 by 2035 (an increase of 30%).

- Older people form a great proportion of our population. The largest population increases are expected to be among people over 75, where by 2031 there will be a 96% (4489) increase (East Midlands 61% and England 50%). Also in those aged 65-74 there will be a 58% (3021) increase (East Midlands 41% and England 38%) - Source SHMA update 2013.
- The number of households in the District is also increasing. At 2012 there were 38,992 households. This is expected to increase to 45,926 households by 2028 (an increase of 18%).
- South Derbyshire has an above average proportion of childless couples at 22.4% (East Midlands 19.5% and England 17.6%), and couples with dependent children at 23.1% (East Midlands 19.7% and England 19.3%) – source SHMA update 2013.
- People are generally living longer, but they are increasingly likely to spend a greater proportion of their life living with disability and long term illness. Research suggests a 66% growth in the older population with dementia over the period to 2030 and a 55% increase in those with mobility problems. This will have significant

implications for housing providers as well as those providing health and social care support.



### Affordability and Impact of the Economic Downturn

- Home ownership in the District has reduced from 89% in 2001 to 75% in 2011 as new house building has slowed and mortgage finance has become more difficult to access.
- There were 18 RTB sales in 2014/15 compared to 17 the previous year.
- Rising fuel prices and falling household incomes mean that increasing numbers of households are at risk of fuel poverty - the last private sector housing stock condition survey estimated around 12% of the population are in fuel poverty.
- Property prices, although relatively cheaper than elsewhere in the Country still remain unaffordable for many local households.
- The average priced property to buy in the District is £175,105.

- The average household income in the District in 2014 was £26,382; this is similar to national levels. Households would require 5 x their income to afford to buy the average priced property in the district.



- The average house price in South Derbyshire increased by £99,500 (167%) from 2001 to 2011, and the local housing market has shown signs of a market recovery with prices in the area increasing by 9% over the last year.
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment undertaken in 2012 identified that there is a requirement for around 1,723 of future housing provision to be in the form of affordable housing up to 2017.

### Generation Rent and the changing demand for social housing

- The private rental market in the district is booming. Private rented lets have increased from 1,817 (5.5%) of the local housing market in 2001 to more than 5,087 (13%) in 2011.
- Homeownership is no longer an option for many young people because of a lack of supply of starter homes, poor mortgage availability and the cost of home ownership.



- Supply of social housing is not meeting demand. The latest SHMA update 2013 indicates affordable housing supply should be close to 49% of new housing, our policy position proposed in the emerging Local Plan is 30%.
- A single rental market, crossing all tenures is emerging in South Derbyshire. This means that social housing providers are now in direct competition with private landlords.
- Certain properties, such as bedsits, in some areas of the District are proving difficult to let.

### South Derbyshire's Homes

- Affordable housing supply has been increasing since 2008. 41 new housing association homes were completed in 2008, and this has increased to 90 new homes in 2014/15.
- The SMHA update 2013 indicates a significant need for three bed properties and suggests that 30% of net housing need could be met by intermediate provision.
- 59% of households on the housing register are singles and couples but one bedroom properties only comprise 23% of the Council's housing stock.
- We have an ageing Council stock that requires ongoing investment if we are to continue providing decent, safe and healthy homes over the long term.
- The average age of our stock is 55 years and 16% of our Council housing stock was built prior to 1945.
- Around 16.3% of private sector homes are failing to meet the decent homes standard compared with 23.1% nationally.
- Around 8% of private sector homes exhibit a Category 1 hazard, posing a serious risk of harm to occupants.

### Changing face of homelessness

- More people are approaching the Council for help and reductions in County Council supported housing budgets mean that more vulnerable people with complex needs are at risk of homelessness.
- With the publication of 'Sustainable Communities: Homes for all' the prevention of homelessness became one of the Council's key priorities.
- The three main reasons for homelessness are loss of rented/tied accommodation, parental/relatives/friends not able to accommodate and violent breakdown of a relationship.
- The number of young people presenting as homeless has increased. 78% (68 people) of homelessness acceptances in 2013/14 were aged under 44 years, and of which 44% (30 people) were aged between 16-24 years.
- Rough sleeping in South Derbyshire is not a significant issue.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation increased in 2013/14 to 110 compared to 77 during 2012/13.
- Homelessness acceptances now tend to be households with dependent children - 56% (49).



# Our Strategic aims and outcomes in more detail

## 1. Improving access to and supply of housing

### What we have done since the last Housing Strategy:

- We have been a leader in affordable housing having seen 430 new affordable homes delivered over the last five years with housing association partners.
- Delivered 73 new affordable homes on rural exception sites to meet the housing needs of our local communities.
- Commenced a programme of new build council housing - our first in 23 years.
- Worked with developers to secure 769 units of affordable housing to meet housing needs through planning gain.
- Worked in partnership with a specialist local housing provider to deliver 8 units of supported accommodation for young people in housing need.
- In partnership with Trident Housing Association and Derbyshire County Council delivered a new purpose built Extra Care village in Swadlincote made up of 88 one and two bedroom apartments with 24/7 on site care, including a specialist community care centre made up of 16 long term residential care beds for older people including expert care for people with dementia and 16 short term care beds to help people rehabilitate including respite care.
- Reduced the number of long-term empty homes in the District to 285, which is the lowest in Derbyshire and continue to work with empty home owners to bring their properties back into use.
- Commissioned some research to consider local housing needs for local parishes and as part of our work on identifying local housing needs we commissioned GL Hearn to update the Derby HMA Strategic Housing Market Assessment in 2013.





## What are the main challenges we need to overcome?

The lack of supply of new housing to meet demand has been a national challenge for the last twenty years. This has been exacerbated over recent years by a sharp fall in housing completions, including affordable housing completions, due to the economic downturn and changes to funding streams.

A lack of supply to meet the changing demographics has affected many sections of our community. There is an increasing proportion of the population unable to purchase a home for the first time and increasing numbers of households seeking advice on their housing options. This is alongside a 18% expected increase in the number of households by 2028.

To promote housing growth the Government is proposing some significant changes to the national housing policy framework. This includes an extension of the 'help to buy' schemes and the creation of a brownfield fund to unlock housing sites to facilitate delivery of 200,000 starter homes, and further reforms of the planning system to simplify the planning process and enable speedier housing development.

For providers of new social housing there are also likely to be some significant challenges including further reductions in the availability of capital grant and proposals to extend the Right To Buy (RTB) to housing association tenants. Furthermore the Government's recent announcement that social rents are to be reduced year on year by 1% for the next four years is likely to have implications as to the level of both public and private investment in the sector.

These measures have implications for the way in which South Derbyshire District Council operates. We have and continue to secure affordable housing via planning gain on sites with 15 or more homes proposed. However, some of the developments are on the fringes of the district and do not necessarily deliver housing, including affordable housing in locations to meet housing need for local residents. The Council will need to play an increasingly proactive role in ensuring a wider range of sites, including regeneration projects, are brought forward for affordable housing development throughout the District, particularly in rural communities.

As the private rented sector forms such a large part of housing provision within the District it will need to play a greater role in accommodating households in housing need. The private rented sector is an area of significant growth and we recognise we need to be targeting improvements in this sector and using this resource to assist with supply.





As part of our strategic housing function the Council has traditionally worked with housing associations and private developers to develop new affordable housing which meets the needs of local people. Funding for affordable housing was cut from £8.4 to £1.7 billion in 2015 as part of the Governments spending cuts.



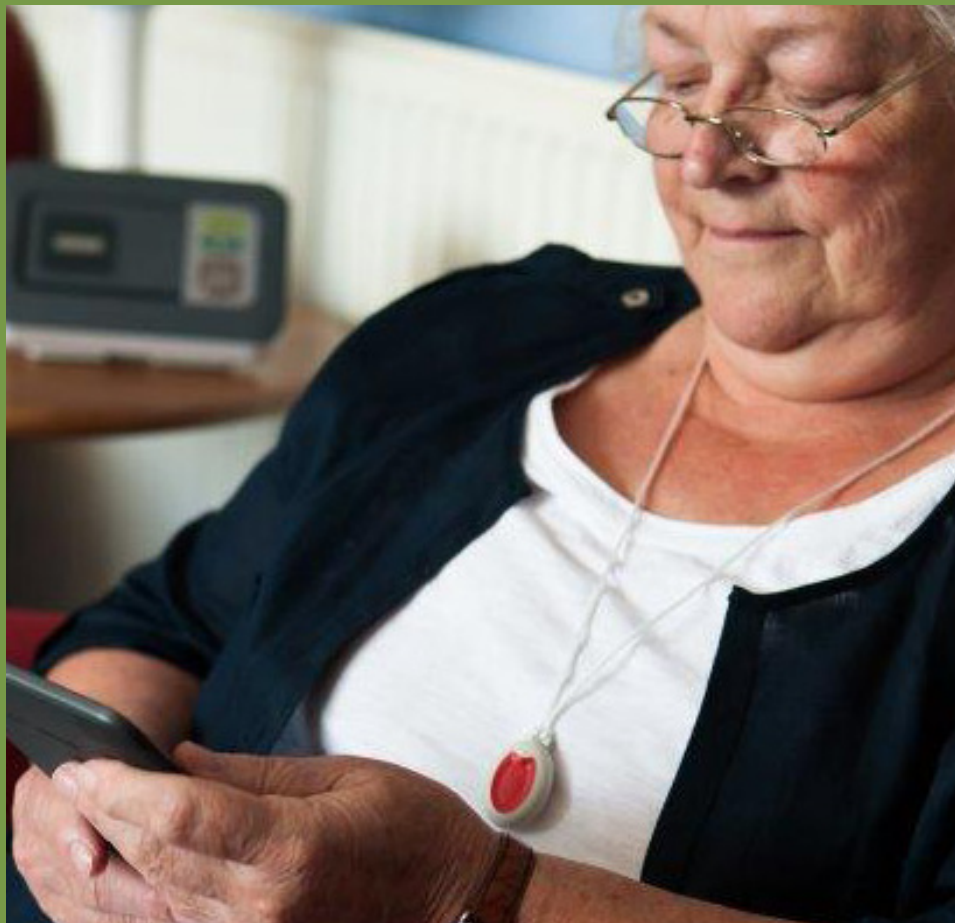
National Affordable Housing Programme

We recognise that grant levels for new affordable housing homes have reduced and that the proposed reduction in social rent levels are likely to significantly impact on the financial capacity of housing associations to deliver new affordable homes. In future the Council will need to consider a range of models to deliver new affordable housing including cross-subsidy, joint ventures as well as making the best use of public assets and financial capacity within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Over the last couple of years we have seen a significant reduction in the level of housing association interest in developing directly in the District as well as the acquisition of new affordable homes delivered by developers as part of planning obligations.



The ageing population will require us to consider a range of housing options for older people, with integrated care and support. This will be challenging in the social housing sector due to the reduction in capital and revenue resources. However, there is potential opportunity within the sector to make better use of existing housing stock to meet the housing needs of families, and the Council is keen to work with private developers in delivering smaller owner occupier homes for those who wish to downsize.



## What we will do over the course of this Strategy

In order to respond effectively to the challenges posed by South Derbyshire's changing housing market we need to ensure we develop new homes which meet local needs and to take action to ensure the long term viability of the Council's existing housing stock. Whilst in our enabling role we will continue to work with developers and housing associations to build and provide new homes, this is unlikely to be enough to satisfy demand and there is a need to explore other options. Our approach is as follows:

### Ensure an increasing supply of good quality new homes of all tenures to support growth

We will continue working with housing association partners, and our past track record in working with housing associations has been successful. As part of the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme for 2015 – 18, local housing associations secured an allocation of £1,100,000 to support delivery of new affordable homes in the District.

We will continue to look for opportunities with our partners. It is likely that the review of the emerging Local Plan will continue to require 30% affordable housing on new developments of 15 or more homes, subject to viability. We will strive to deliver this provision on site, or through off site provision if appropriate. We will consider acquisitions where they can deliver a fairly quick supply of new affordable homes. These could be 'off the shelf' purchases to assist with stalled sites, sites where there is no housing association appetite to procure the affordable housing, or open market purchases in areas where there are high levels of housing need.



We will support developers by publishing Affordable Guidance setting out our approach and expectations for new affordable housing. We will also set out the Council's ambition to build new affordable housing over the next five years, including a proportion of smaller one and two bedroom homes to meet the needs of current and future communities.



The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment recommends an indicative mix for both new market housing and affordable housing which we will aim to achieve, but we will give due regard to the local community housing needs where necessary.

On both council and housing association led developments we will focus on trying to balance the mismatch of affordable housing supply to promote the sustainability of local communities including where there is evidence to deliver special needs properties.

Our feasibility work on council new build will focus on trying to balance the mismatch between supply and demand for smaller properties, ensuring that smaller properties, including bungalows feature in the design work.

We will look to review the housing needs in rural communities of less than 3,000 residents with the aim of promoting the development of mixed tenure sites exception sites for housing for local residents.





## Make best use of existing stock

As the demand for new affordable homes built by housing associations continues to outstrip supply locally, we have been working on how to make better use of our own Council stock. In particular, we want to ensure that the Council housing stock continues to provide homes where families aspire to live.

The Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy is being refreshed to ensure that our current stock of 2982 properties are fit for purpose over the short/medium and longer term and that they are homes that people want to live in.

We will continue to enhance the council offer through a range of initiatives.

## Unlock the potential of empty homes

Empty homes could create opportunities for addressing the housing need that exists within the District.

We will continue working with owners of empty properties to encourage them to bring their properties back into use and will continue to explore options for extending our work and looking at potential acquisitions where viable.

We will review and update our Empty Homes Strategy over the course of this Housing Strategy.

**More detailed information and projects are included within the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2016-21**



## 2. Well maintained, safer, greener homes

### What have we done since the last Housing Strategy:

- In 2014 we published a new Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, setting out our priorities and plans for improving private sector house conditions. Alongside this we have a Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and a Private Sector Housing Grants Policy
- We hosted several successful Landlord Information Forums during 2014/15, attended by over 20 local private sector landlords
- Proactively continued to tackle private sector empty properties in the District. To date we have ensured that 8 private empty homes have been returned to use.
- In 2013/14 we provided funding of just over £490,000 to owner occupiers on low incomes, privately renting tenants, and housing association tenants to help them improve their homes through our Disabled Facilities Grants.
- Between 2012 - 2017 we will have invested over £27.35 million in Capital refurbishments to our council homes.
- As part of our improvement programme during 2014/15 we installed 234 new bathrooms, 228 new kitchens and 557 over the bath showers.
- We have been carrying out monthly estate inspections on our housing estates to resolve any management issues and to identify actions to improve the environment.
- Gained grant funding of nearly £240,000 to contribute towards improving external wall insulation for approximately 90 council properties.
- A New Build tenant's forum has been formed and who meet on a quarterly basis to monitor our new build development process and the design specification of the properties.
- Reduced the average empty council property re-let time from 27.3 days in 2013/14 to 17.1 days in 2014/15.



## What are the main challenges we need to overcome

Through its national housing strategy, the Government recognises that our homes need to be well designed, of the highest quality and environmentally sustainable. This applies to both new and existing homes which, where possible, should be more energy efficient and help to reduce carbon emissions, be resilient to a future climate and protect the natural environment. High quality homes in high quality natural environments will support our plans for growth and are necessary for social, environmental and economic sustainability. Poor quality housing and hazards in the home can have a significant impact on the health and life chances of those living there. A lack of basic amenities, overcrowding, poor internal layouts, inadequate thermal comfort, excessive noise, dampness, and condensation can all adversely affect physical health in terms of excess winter deaths, respiratory infections, coronary heart disease, strokes, and mental wellbeing through increased anxiety, social isolation and stress levels.

People are generally living longer, but they are increasingly likely to spend a greater proportion of their life living with disability and long term illness. 5,800 households (16.2%) in the District are affected by a long-term health problem or disability. This has significant implications for housing providers, as well as those providing health and social care support. The Council experiences a high level of demand for Disabled Facilities Grants and with an ageing population and improved life expectancy for younger people with severe disabilities this is expected to continue.

## What we will do over the course of this Strategy

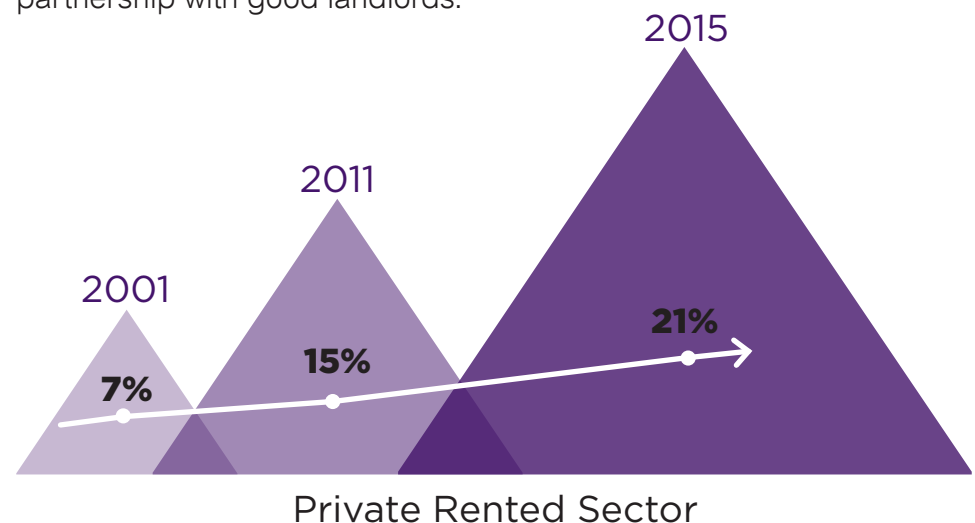
The Council wants homes of all tenures to be safe, in a good state of repair and free from risks to the residents health – including offering adequate thermal warmth. The safer and more efficiently insulated a home, the more energy efficient it is. Our approach is as follows:

## Ensure decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector

The Council has a legal duty to ensure serious hazards are removed from properties. The most common hazard is excess cold, which can be detrimental to health and quality of life – especially for older people, children and those with a disability or long term illness. We will continue with formal intervention in line with our statutory duties on stock condition and category 1 hazards. In practice this means we will maintain a programme of inspection and regulation for high risk properties and take action in response to complaints from householders.

## Support the growing Private Rented Sector

Private renting can offer a wider choice of housing than the social rented sector in relation to location, size, type and flexibility. Demand in this sector has increased by 100% in the last 10 years and is likely to continue to do so. Our challenge is to help facilitate this growth in a sustainable way through regulation, enforcement and working in partnership with good landlords.





## Improve the condition and energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock

We have an ageing local authority housing stock that requires on-going investment if it is to continue providing decent, safe and healthy homes over the long term. South Derbyshire District Council own and manage approximately 3,000 homes. In terms of age, over 16% of properties were built prior to 1945 with only 5% of homes built in the period since 1984. The average age of the Council's housing stock is 55 years and this will increase to 70 years by 2028.

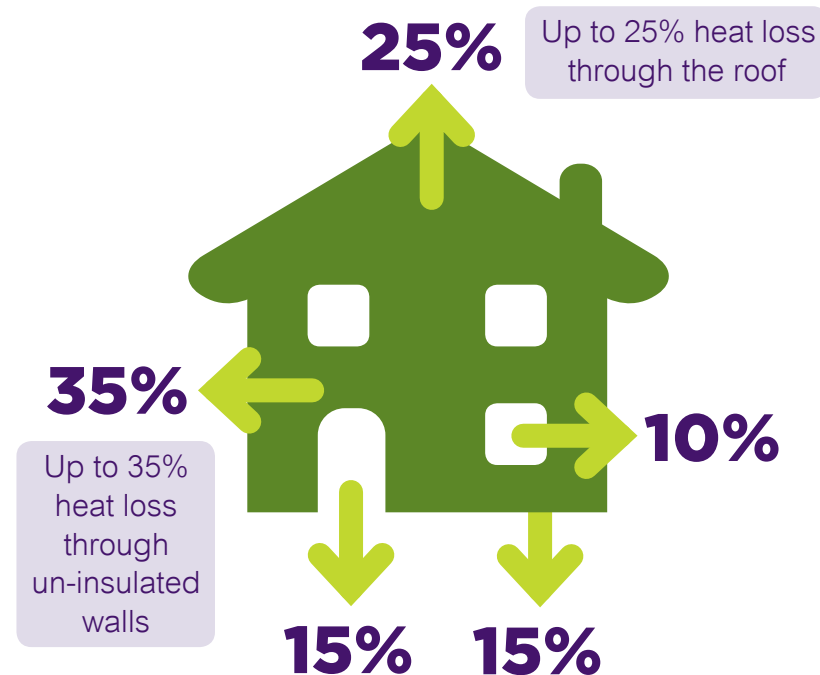
We will continue our work on improving the condition and energy efficiency of our housing stock. Part of this will involve developing a balanced asset management strategy which combines major investment in our older homes ensuring long term viability with a planned maintenance programme, improving our estates and providing a responsive and reliable day to day repairs service.

In February 2012 the Council approved a five year £27.35m capital investment programme to ensure that our stock is well maintained, remains decent and desirable to existing and prospective tenants.

## Reduce Fuel Poverty

We will review and update our Fuel Poverty Strategy alongside continuing to ensure Council properties are warmer, have lower fuel bills and are more attractive properties. For all tenures we will work to provide advice on energy efficiency and household budgeting. We will explore how we can address fuel poverty through new community funds generated by new energy installations in the District. Rising fuel prices and falling household incomes mean that increasing number of households are at risk of fuel poverty. The main principal drivers of fuel poverty in South Derbyshire are household income and energy prices. Our last Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey, which was conducted in 2014, found that around

4,393 private sector households in our District (11%) are estimated to be in fuel poverty. Rates of fuel poverty are above the District average of 11% for households living in pre-1919 (17.7%) and 1919 – 1944 (19.4) housing.



## Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on our estates

The level of crime and anti-social behaviour within our neighbourhoods can be a major influence on the health and wellbeing of residents. We will continue to work closely with our statutory and non-statutory partners to respond to criminal activity in our properties and resolve complaints of anti-social behaviour at the lowest possible level. New powers will enable us to take proper action in relation to the misuse of properties and we will use these powers as necessary. We will be enabled to deal more flexibly with a variety of situations and focus more closely on the impact behaviour is having on the victim.

### 3. Helping people to live independently

#### What we have done since the last Housing Strategy

- In partnership with Trident Housing Association and Derbyshire County Council delivered a new purpose built Extra Care village in Swadlincote made up of 88 one and two bedroom apartments with 24/7 on site care. It has a specialist community care centre made up of 16 long term residential care beds for older people including expert care for people with dementia and 16 short term care beds to help people rehabilitate including respite care.
- Created a Housing Services Tenancy Sustainment Officer post and they have helped over 90 tenants. 73 of these referrals were helped to stay in their homes and included preventing 14 evictions.
- Supported 99 tenants in 2014/15 with budgeting and financial advice through the tenancy sustainment service.
- Appointed a Homelessness Case Officer in 2013/14 to provide support to vulnerable young people.
- Developed a new permanent site for Gypsies and Travellers.
- Secured portable heaters to support vulnerable households during the winter.
- Reduced the time taken for fitting of level access showers by 30%.
- Developed a framework for a Careline Partnership to operate county wide.
- Increased the number of private sector connections to Careline and in 2013/14 answered 98.1% (36,678) of all calls in 30 seconds.

- Worked with the local health authority and Derbyshire County Council to review falls recovery for vulnerable people across South Derbyshire.
- Improved and updated car parking spaces on some of the Council's sheltered schemes.



## What are the main challenges we need to overcome

The Government has embarked on a radical programme to shift power to local councils and communities. Part of this included a fundamental reform of social housing with the aims to make the system fairer, striking a proper balance between the needs of new and existing tenants, to ensure that the support which social housing provides is focused on those who need it most for as long as they need it and to give local authorities and housing associations new powers so that they can make best use of their housing, in a way which best meets the needs of individual households and their local area.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 has brought about the biggest overhaul of the benefits system since the 1940s, impacting on local people on low incomes as well as housing providers. Approximately 60% of the Council's tenants rely on housing benefit and there has been an increase in rent arrears for the Council from £170,351.89 at 1st April 2014 to £193,459.57 at 1st April 2015.

As well as providing services for people who are threatened with homelessness, we need to help vulnerable people to live independently within the community with appropriate support. Reductions in the County Council's supported housing budgets mean that more vulnerable people with complex needs are at risk of homelessness.

With the publication of 'Sustainable Communities: Homes for all' the prevention of homelessness became one of the Council's key priorities and our homelessness prevention service is based on the Housing Options model of providing advice, support or advocacy before homelessness arises.

Increasing numbers of vulnerable households, particularly single people with mental illness, are becoming homeless as a result of their inability to maintain their home following the loss of supported housing or housing related support. While some fall within the safety net of the Council's statutory homelessness duties, this is not the case for the majority of single person households.

There are 146 applicants with a medical need to move on the housing waiting list and approaches from single people with mental health issues has increased from 9 in 2011/12 to 18 in 2014/15.

People are generally living longer but they are increasingly likely to spend a greater proportion of their life living with disability and long term illness. 16.2% of households in the District have at least one person in the household with a long term health problem or disability. This has significant implications for housing providers, as well as those providing support services.

Older people form a greater proportion of our population and this is projected to increase significantly from 2011 to 2031. There is a sharp increase in people aged over 85 in South Derbyshire (150%) compared to East Midlands (111.7%) and England (97.7%).

England's care and support system changed in April 2015 and the Care Act outlines the importance of housing in the prevention of the need for care and support and for promoting better integration between housing and health related services. The Better Care Fund, which is a local single pooled budget created by the government in 2013 incentivises the NHS and local government to work more closely together. This new way of working has been welcomed by the numerous stakeholders involved but does bring significant challenges with it.



## What we will do over the course of this Strategy

New provision should be tailored to meet the needs of older people, people with physical disabilities and supported housing for vulnerable groups, however new supply is not the only solution. Adapting or remodelling existing properties can allow individuals to remain in their current home or might offer a more cost effective way of facilitating a move for a household in need.

To ensure we have the right type of properties available and in the right areas we need to have an up to date understanding of what is required and by whom. We will commission and publish a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This will help us meet the needs of specific groups including older people and people with disabilities and it will help to inform our future plans.

We have recently reviewed and updated our Housing Allocations Policy to ensure that it supports homelessness prevention and our discharging duty and minimises the time that households spend in temporary accommodation. Our approach is as follows:

## Prevent homelessness whenever possible through high quality advice and assistance

We are reviewing the delivery of our services to the homeless to ensure that they are both customer focused and cost effective for the Council. This involves improving our performance in processing homeless applications to reduce the time households spend in temporary accommodation alongside reducing our use of temporary accommodation through homelessness prevention work.

We aim to place a greater emphasis on the needs of new tenants of the Council and put in place the support they require during the first year of a tenancy in order to mitigate against tenancy failure in the long term. The long term aim is to achieve better tenancy sustainment for our tenants.

## Work with those most affected by welfare reform to mitigate against the impact it has had on their lives

While we have adopted an approach of early intervention to support affected tenants, some have found themselves facing rent arrears for the first time. With an insufficient supply of smaller affordable homes for under occupying tenants to downsize to, we must continue to find ways of working with people affected to help mitigate the negative impact it has on their lives.



We will continue to provide effective and timely housing and housing related advice and we are proposing to develop a range of advice and support services for vulnerable, low income households, investing in additional tenancy support to Council tenants to minimise the risk of tenancy breakdown.

We will continue to monitor the impacts of welfare reforms, anticipate how residents will be affected, and offer support services where necessary.

By offering customers more intense support and training, tenancy sustainment is more likely to be a success. Tenants are more likely to improve in confidence relating to their financial and social issues, manage their tenancies in a positive way, engage with the Council and other support services when they need to, be encouraged to engage in local services regarding health and wellbeing and feel confident in moving forward with further learning.

### **Ensure that accommodation and services provided for elderly residents remain relevant and responsive to their needs**

Changes in the older person population may mean that additional and specialist accommodation is required in the future. However, existing sheltered housing may not be attractive to current households (bedsits) and therefore growing demand from an increasing older population will not necessarily translate into demand for the existing stock.

### **Improving the range of housing options for vulnerable people with support where necessary**

As many NHS services are under pressure, we will work closer with the health service to reduce the strain on their services and provide better living standards for those people in NHS care, including the vulnerable, disabled and older people. This will involve working in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations as the Council does not have the resources to make a difference on its own.

## **Monitoring of the Strategy and Action Plan**

Linked to this Housing Strategy is a detailed Action Plan for each of the strategic aims. The Action Plan will act as a working document for Officers and will be kept under review and updated regularly.

We will continue to support the Healthy Futures Project which is funded by the South Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group and which aims to reduce repeat hospital admissions and support people to find appropriate accommodation upon discharge.

Levels of households with a household member with a mobility issue are increasing and as such we will aim to provide more bungalows built to full mobility standards and lifetime homes standard properties on our affordable housing schemes.

We will continue to provide a programme of Disabled Facilities Grants to Council residents and those living in the private sector to enable them to continue to live independently.

We will seek to work proactively with the County Council to ensure that housing options are effectively integrated to support adults with chaotic lives and troubled families. We will also work with partners in Mental Health Services and Probation to achieve better housing outcomes for those leaving institutional care.

We will continue to deliver services, such as tenancy support, in order that tenants can maintain their tenancies and reduce the risk of tenancy failure.

Although this Strategy will initially cover a five year period, if national policy or economic conditions significantly change then it may require a refresh.

## Action Plan Objectives

### Strategic Outcome: HS01 - Improving access to and supply of housing

#### Objective

- HS Obj 01a** Ensure an increasing supply of good quality new homes of all tenures to contribute to meeting the growing need for housing in South Derbyshire which supports economic growth
- HS Obj 01b** Increase the supply of affordable homes and ensure the right mix to encourage mixed communities and discourage exclusion
- HS Obj 01c** Unlock the potential of empty homes and minimise voids
- HS Obj 01d** Make the best use of existing housing stock

### Strategic Outcome: HS02 - Well maintained, safer, greener homes

#### Objective

- HS Obj 02a** Ensure decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector
- HS Obj 02b** Support the growing private rented sector
- HS Obj 02c** Reduce fuel poverty
- HS Obj 02d** Improve the condition and energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock
- HS Obj 02e** Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on our estates

### Strategic Outcome: HS03 - Helping people to live independently

#### Objective

- HS Obj 03a** Protect and support vulnerable individuals to improve their quality of life and decrease exclusion
- HS Obj 03b** Realise the potential of the homes we already have in providing housing solutions for those with more complex needs
- HS Obj 03c** Provide excellent advice, information and access to services
- HS Obj 03d** Prevent homelessness through high quality advice and assistance
- HS Obj 03e** Ensure that accommodation and services provided for elderly people remains relevant and responsive to their needs
- HS Obj 03f** Work with those most affected by welfare reform



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This information is also available in large print, Braille or audio format upon request.

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