



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

West Northamptonshire

Housing Strategy

2022-2025



Foreword

As a new unitary authority covering a wide geographical area that includes large urban centres and rural hinterlands, it is important that we detail how WNC and its partners will undertake the strategic housing role. It provides an opportunity to shape and deliver our vision for the West Northamptonshire area.

This is the first Housing Strategy for West Northamptonshire Council, forming one of the cornerstones for delivering the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2025.

We recognise that there are challenging times ahead, the current energy crisis and the cost-of-living increases are causing severe financial difficulties to many households. It is critical that the housing strategy focusses priorities and actions that provide greater stability and support for households and communities that will help create sustainable and thriving communities for people living in West Northants.

This strategy sets out to tackle big issues like affordability, health, the supply of new homes and the environment. These are not easy things to solve, but we can make a real contribution to improved outcomes for many people by taking the right steps now.



This strategy is a high-level document setting out a clear vision with strong leadership for West Northants Council and its partners to ensure that housing, planning, health, economic development and regeneration work together to deliver and influence an integrated housing market. It is critical therefore that working in partnership and across boundaries forms part of our approach.

The strategy has been brought together by a wide range of people with different views so we have already started this journey.

Councillor Adam Brown
Portfolio Holder for Housing, Culture and Leisure





Our vision

is to make

West Northants

a great place

to live, work,

visit and

thrive:

A place where there is opportunity for all – where children are given the best start in life and vulnerable children are supported and protected. A place where all young people grow up qualified and inspired to succeed.

A place where people are proud to live, with strong sustainable communities, decent homes, a fulfilling job, and stress-free travel through well connected places.

A place where people are supported to live independent, self-sufficient lives and where everyone has the best life chances. A place where services are joined up and if you need a helping hand you'll get it.

A place with a thriving and prosperous economy that draws in investment, visitors and talent. A place where we have modern towns but where rural character is cherished.

A place at the forefront of action on climate change with clean air, sustainable growth and a flourishing natural environment.

Context

This strategy cannot operate in isolation and in developing it with other stakeholders we have been mindful of changing conditions which will impact on its delivery. We have taken into account the following national, local and organisational factors.

National Policy

There is an increased emphasis on regulation nationally which will greatly impact the delivery and management of housing, with a particular emphasis on social housing, much of which stems from the enquiries into the fire at Grenfell. As a result of this we will see:

- New Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, which will:
 - Promote consumer standards and a greater level of intervention from the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH)
 - New tenant satisfaction measures
 - New complaint handling code and increased role for housing ombudsman
- A new regulator for Building Safety within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that will oversee the implementation of new regulations
- A New Homes Ombudsman for owners of new-build homes to escalate complaints
- New Government targets for environmental sustainability
- A new standard for Decent Homes
- Uplift in the energy efficiency of new homes through changes to Building Regulations and published Future Homes Standard

Local Policy

The Housing Strategy is designed to support the delivery of the objectives set out in the West Northamptonshire Corporate Plan and works in tandem with other strategies and plans including:

- Allocation's policies
- Anti-Poverty Strategy
- Better Care Fund plans to enable the delivery of the disabled facilities mandatory and discretionary regime
- Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire (ICAN)
- Joint Commissioning Strategy for people with a learning disability
- Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans
- Northampton Town Centre Masterplan
- Northamptonshire Children's Trust – Looked after Children and Care Leavers strategy (2021-25)
- Sustainability Strategy

Sustainability and the Climate Emergency

Challenges in social, economic and environmental sustainability are critical to our future and need to be taken into account. The Government wants to deliver ambitious targets, particularly in relation to climate through local Councils and communities. West Northants has signed up to UK100 which seeks to deliver some of those targets ahead of Government deadlines and this strategy is aligned to these goals.

The Council have set three sustainability pledges

- To make the Council's own emissions net zero by 2030 and those of residents and businesses by 2045;
- Take a community leadership role for Sustainability across West Northants;
- Ensure Council strategies and policies are aligned to and contribute to the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals.

The role that housing plays in creating a better and fairer society is recognised, and can be instrumental in some of the other council priorities including tackling poverty and inequality and the impacts on people's health and security.

Context

Economic outlook

At the time of writing this strategy, there were a range of challenges which were making the economic outlook uncertain. Against a backdrop of a rapidly rising cost-of-living particularly in relation to food and energy costs, increased inflation and interest rates were affecting things like debt and mortgages. This in turn was creating an upward pressure on wages in public services and elsewhere.

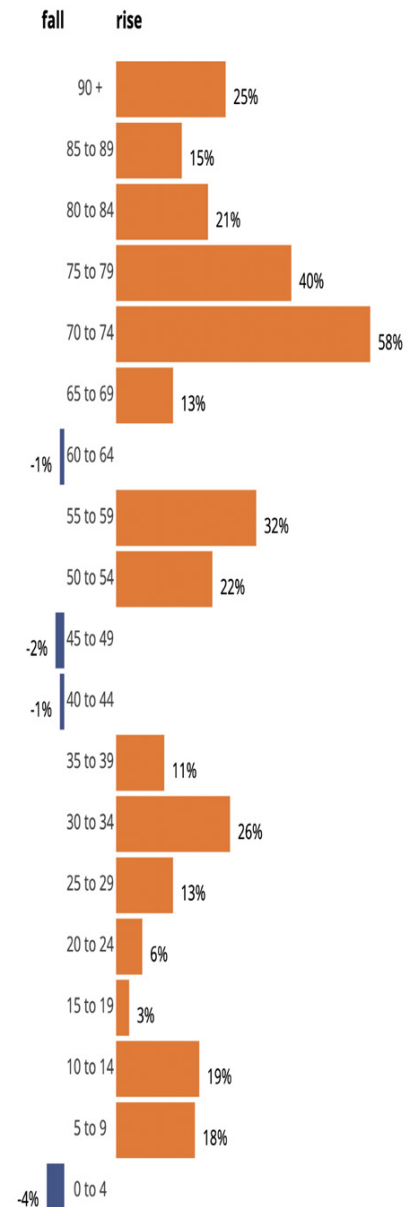
Reduced access to materials, food and energy was also likely to increase due to global difficulties relating to sanctions and the war in Ukraine. This has the potential in affecting the cost of new build homes, leading to a reduction in the volume of new homes being built.

A changing local population

West Northants is a growing area, with a population of 425,700 (2021 Census) residents, it is anticipated that the population will grow by 7% up to 2030, and the number of households is set to grow by 12% by 2030. Within that, the population aged 65 year and over is expected to grow by 9% which represents 76% of total population growth.

The latest census information confirms this trend with a population growth of 13.5% in the last 10 years (the second highest in the East Midlands and against a national average of 6.6%). Within this the data also reflects an ageing population as well as a growing population across almost all age groups:

Figure 1: Population change (%) by age group in West Northants (2011 to 2021)



We need to have ambitious plans to create the homes people need alongside a thriving economy to ensure we meet the housing needs and demands of existing and future residents.

West Northamptonshire also has an ageing population, so alongside the current and potential future public health challenges we need to have the right kind of support that can flex as the need arises. Identifying and responding to an individual's changing needs requires the integration of housing support and health services so that they are joined up from the perspective of the people using them. This challenge is within a context of increased pressure on Adult Social Care funding including recruitment difficulties.

Context

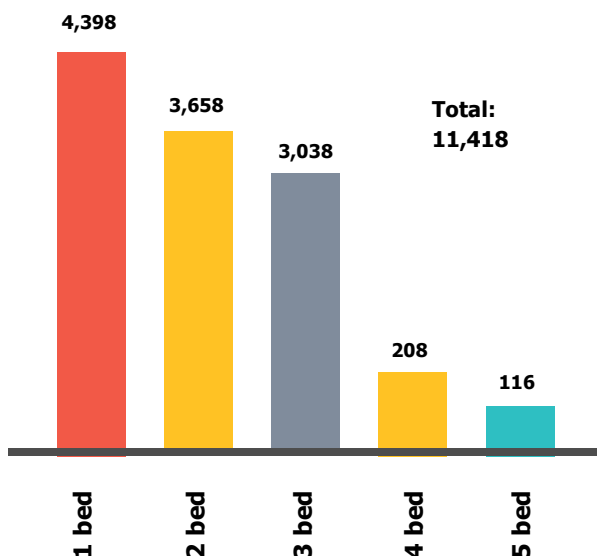
West Northants Council - a developing organisation

As a newly created unitary authority we are still making progress in harmonising the delivery of services and undertaking a full transformation programme. Over the next three years (the life of this strategy) the council will continue to develop a range of plans and strategies and when this strategy is reviewed in 2025 we will ensure that we are aligning the Housing Strategy goals with strategies that have been adopted during that period.

This strategy and the operational delivery plan will be clear on what priorities /action can be delivered within the lifetime of this strategy and those that are much longer term.

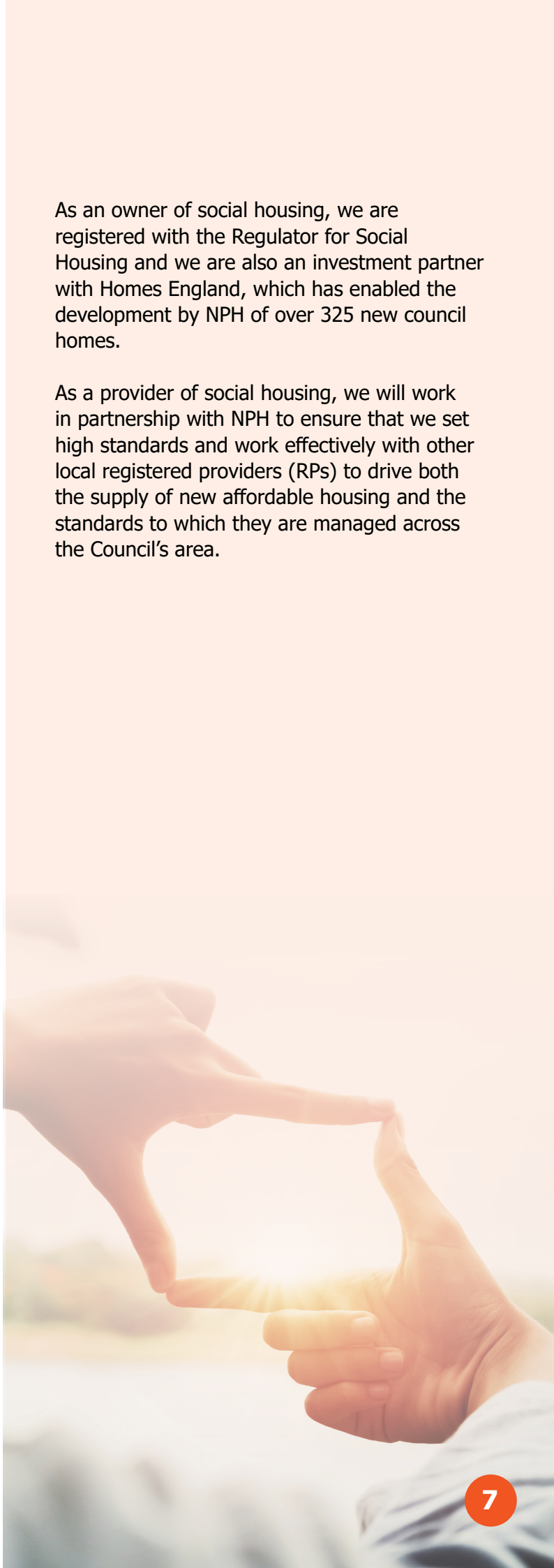
The Council as a landlord

Whilst this strategy covers all forms of housing including home ownership, private rented and social housing, West Northants Council owns over 12,000 homes (including leaseholder and shared ownership) with the majority of the homes managed by Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH), who are the Council's arms-length management organisation (ALMO).



As an owner of social housing, we are registered with the Regulator for Social Housing and we are also an investment partner with Homes England, which has enabled the development by NPH of over 325 new council homes.

As a provider of social housing, we will work in partnership with NPH to ensure that we set high standards and work effectively with other local registered providers (RPs) to drive both the supply of new affordable housing and the standards to which they are managed across the Council's area.



Theme 1 – Deliver homes people need and can afford

Context

West Northamptonshire is an area with significant growth and economic potential. It is a prosperous place, where people want to live and stay. It has an attractive and good quality housing offer, creating prosperous places and neighbourhoods, to attract and retain skilled people, investment, employment opportunities and new economic opportunities. The housing strategy presents an opportunity to improve the use of housing in the area as an enabler for economic growth and local economic development and make stronger links between housing and the economy at a local level.

The supply of new homes is central to the economic and social prosperity of any area. It is critical therefore that we ensure the delivery of a range of housing options at the right price and in the right locations to cater for different needs both now and in the future.

The feedback we have had (from the consultation for this strategy) was that affordability and supply of new homes was the most important issue for residents. All too often local people are priced out of the area and are forced to move away from family, friends and sometimes employment. The importance of delivering genuine affordable housing was a key concern. Also, the Council's adopted anti-poverty strategy highlighted that high housing and living costs had the most direct impact on poverty and material deprivation.

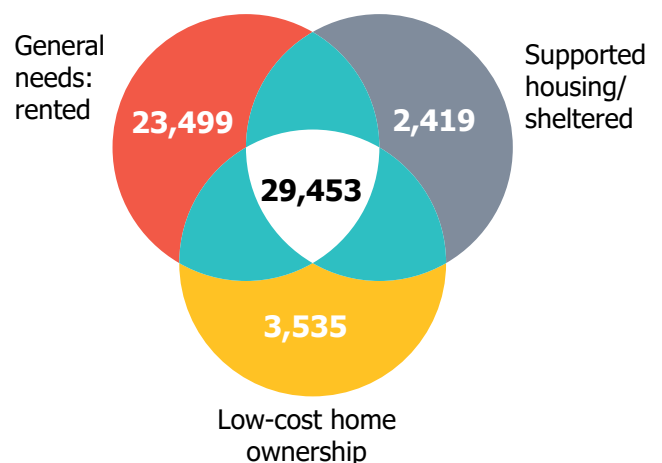
Alongside this, residents said that new development needs to be supported with the right infrastructure with people citing health, education and public transport as things which need to be considered. This ties in with the provision of a range of services that need to go alongside housing to bring about prosperity and improved community and health outcomes. This is covered more in Theme 3.

Of course, we recognise that in some areas affordability is the biggest challenge, whilst in other areas there is a need to add greater variety catering for different incomes and standards to increase choice and value. Therefore, we need to understand our local housing market and to help deliver what is appropriate and affordable.

Levering new investment into the area will be essential to meet our current and future needs and this strategy recognises that strong partnerships are needed to achieve this. As an investment partner, our relationship with Homes England will be crucial in how their funding can support greater certainty to deliver the homes we need.

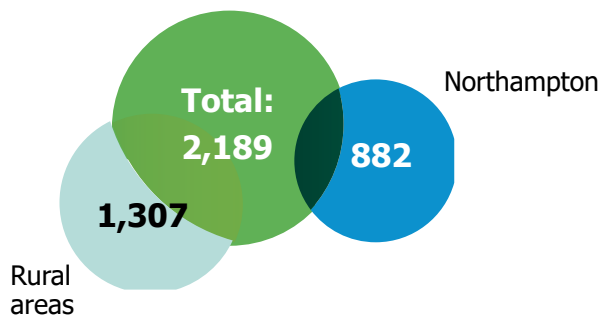
Registered Providers across West Northants own and manage over 29,000 affordable homes across the area, which includes just over 12,000 council homes managed by our arm's length management company – Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH).

Figure 2: The number of affordable homes across West Northants (2021)



Theme 1 – Deliver homes people need and can afford

Registered providers also develop new homes with an extra 2189 homes delivered over the last five years and an additional 973 due to complete in the next two years.



Working in partnership with affordable housing providers alongside Northampton Partnership Homes who manage our Council homes is key to delivering the range of housing options needed by residents. As part of this, it is important that we fully understand our own portfolio of assets, including our housing estates, to identify opportunities for new development, under-utilised spaces or redevelopment of poorly performing properties.

A key focus of NPH's new housing delivery programme will be the regeneration of the Council's housing estates, which will deliver benefits to tenants and the wider community.

Although a large component of new affordable housing delivery is through S106 led development – a legally binding agreement or planning obligation as part of the granting of planning permission. It is important that NPH should only consider delivering S106 sites where this represents additionality and the best value in delivering new properties. There are RP partners working across the Council area who would purchase affordable housing through S106 led development.

The Council will play an active role in engaging with partners and developers in bringing

forward sites to ensure a pipeline of high-quality homes that also meet our ambitions for environmental sustainability. This will include supply chains for factory-built homes using modern methods of construction (MMC) to improve quality, reduce waste and shorten delivery times.

The availability and land development costs can be prohibitive and act as a barrier to development, the consideration of joint ventures is a proactive way that brings together the local authority, RPs, Homes England and other key partners to help scale up delivery, develop homes that are needed and are in right location and the ability to manage exposure, sharing risk and reward and help keep the costs of development in an uncertain market.

Planning Requirements

The planning policy requirements for new housing, including affordable housing, are set out in the West Northants Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) (December 2014) and the part two local plans which have been adopted for the former Daventry and South Northants. The part two local plan for Northampton is expected to be adopted by the end of 2022.

The Council's Local Plans sets out the requirement for an appropriate mix of housing types, tenures and sizes, and the required percentage of affordable housing (subject to viability). It is important that to deliver truly sustainable and healthy communities the Council works with developers / applicants/agents etc to ensure that the size of accommodation that is delivered meets the reasonable expectations of the intended number of occupants and where possible aligns with nationally prescribed space standards. The WNJCS emphasises the importance of maximising development opportunities on brownfield land. Northampton provides the most opportunities for brownfield development, and several sites included in the emerging part two plan are on previously developed land.

Theme 1 – Deliver homes people need and can afford

West Northants Council is preparing a new West Northants Strategic Plan (WNSP) for the area (due to be adopted in 2025) which will replace the WNJCS and set out the spatial vision for the area up to 2041. This will include the range and amount of housing that needs to be provided across West Northants, including the proportion of housing that should be affordable.

Work undertaken so far in the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment which looked at the period to 2050, shows that 64,170 additional dwellings are needed (2139 annually) by 2050, 37 869 of which would need to be affordable properties.

This compares to 2182 new affordable homes delivered over the last 5 years, however the development of the WNSP will be an opportunity to review our planning policies in relation to affordable housing and ensure we maximise delivery of affordable homes through the planning system.

The WNSP will also seek to connect the supply of new housing to wider strategies and policies including the quality of place and town centres, infrastructure provision including schools and health facilities, as well as looking at utilities, transport, access to open space, flood risk and sustainability. The WNSP once adopted will give developers, landowners, Registered Providers and Investors a clear policy context to work within.

Theme 1: Our priorities

1.1 Develop an evidence base of the full range of housing need across West Northants and identify gaps with the current housing supply

1.2 Increase the supply of social and affordable housing, including the delivery of council homes through our ALMO (NPH), and working in partnership with a range of providers and making the best use of the Council's land assets and resources

1.3 Support the delivery of a range of housing to meet local needs including private rent, housing for older people, low-cost home ownership, intermediate rent and outright sale.

Theme 1: What do we plan to do

1.1 Develop an evidence base of the full range of housing need across West Northamptonshire and identify gaps with the current housing supply

- We will collect and make available evidence of our housing market intelligence that can be used by a variety of stakeholders to plan the delivery of the right housing in the right location
- We will outline the specific needs of various groups including young people, care leavers, older people, people with physical disabilities, people with mental health needs, marginalised ethnic groups, travellers and people with learning difficulties

1.2 Increase the supply of social and affordable housing, including the delivery of council homes through our ALMO (NPH), and working in partnership with a range of providers and making the best use of the Council's land assets and resources

- Through the Local Plans, we will drive developers' compliance in delivering the required percentage of affordable housing on all qualifying development sites
- We will engage with the development of the Strategic Plan to support the delivery of infrastructure and promote placemaking through quality of the environment, public realm, quality recreation and community space.
- We will maximise grant funding opportunities and ensure continual engagement with central Government departments including DLUHC, Homes England and BEIS
- We will review options to encourage a faster rate of delivery of new homes through modern methods of construction (MMC)

Theme 1 – Deliver homes people need and can afford

- We will work with partners to deliver more social rent and genuine affordable housing and set out a definition for affordability across West Northants
- We will co-create with NPH a Development Strategy to identify development opportunities to deliver 500 Council homes (2021-2025) and where feasible on a social rent basis
- We will work closely with the Regeneration team to identify sites that will support the delivery of new affordable housing opportunities
- We will create a development framework with affordable housing providers to focus the delivery of new homes in alignment with the Council's aspirations and priorities
- We will work with Assets and Regeneration to develop a Council Asset Management Strategy which encompasses opportunities for development on Council owned sites including disposal criteria that take into account social value.

1.3 Support the delivery of a range of high-quality housing to meet local needs and wider economic aspirations and prosperity, including private rent, housing for older people, low-cost home ownership, intermediate rent, self-build and outright sale homes.

- We will work with 'Build to Rent' providers to ensure the new provision of high quality private and intermediate rent properties in locations where they are needed
- We will work with Parish and Town Councils and community groups to deliver rural affordable schemes and community led homes for residents
- We will identify areas which will benefit from intermediate and low-cost home ownership and Government led schemes to increase supply in those areas

Theme 1: How we will measure our progress

We will monitor the following areas and report back on an annual basis to track our progress:

New Homes	The number of new homes delivered (all tenures)
Affordable Housing	The % of homes which are affordable on sites and meeting the local plan's threshold for affordable housing provision
New Council Homes	The number of new council homes delivered (500 by 2025)



Theme 2 - Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services

Context

Everyone living in a rented property should have well maintained homes and services that meet minimum standards and it is expected that we will use the powers we have across private rent and social housing to ensure this happens. Health outcomes are strongly linked to the condition of homes so it is vital that we maintain and invest in the housing stock and work together to drive up standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents. Where we own the homes, as a council we will ensure we deliver the regulatory requirements and where these are changing, we will work across social landlords to ensure the new standards are met.

The Social Housing White Paper (2020) focussed on rebalancing the relationship between tenants and landlords to ensure tenants are safe in their home, that they have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in, and ensuring tenants voices are heard. This spans across all tenures and it part of our role whether renting from a social or private landlord to ensure the rights and responsibilities of landlords are protected.

The Levelling Up White Paper (2022) provides 12 missions to 'Level Up' the UK. From a housing perspective, Mission 10 seeks to ensure that renters will have a secure path to home ownership, and that the Decent Homes standard will be used to measure the quality of private rented properties.

Safe and Decent Homes

Keeping residents safe from fire and other hazards is critical and requires regular maintenance, and planned investment. This is reflected in the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Act 2021, which is overhauling the building safety framework and introduces sweeping changes to the control and

management of high-risk residential buildings which need to be adhered to.

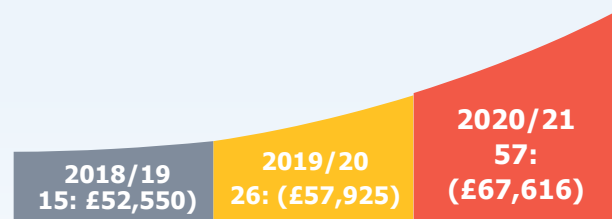
Where we own the homes, as a council we will ensure we deliver the regulatory requirements and where these are changing, we will work across social landlords to ensure the new standards are met. This is particularly applicable to the introduction of a new Decent Homes Standard for social housing where we will need to ensure compliance is delivered for Council homes within a reasonable timescale.

Private rented sector

The private rented housing sector is a valuable part of the housing market and it is growing across West Northants. It caters for a number of different types of housing need and demand, and for some it is the tenure of choice, however for others it is not, this is mainly due to affordability, concerns of security of tenure, bad management and property conditions. The Council have increased notices service on private landlords in recent years.

Figure 4: The number of Civil Penalty Notices (2018-2021)

Civil Penalty Notices:



Theme 2 - Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services

West Northants, and particularly Northampton is very reliant on the private rented sector for helping with housing needs and homelessness demand, however the availability and cost of good privately rented accommodation varies greatly across the area and is in limited supply. According to the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment the profile of the private rented sector in West Northants includes a much younger demographic profile and a high proportion of multi-adult households.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) can form a vital source of housing, traditionally providing housing at the more affordable and transient end of the housing market. However, it is also acknowledged that HMOs often house the most vulnerable in society. They can present challenging management issues and can impact on the community. The extended definition of houses in multiple occupation also expands the local authority's role and therefore we need to ensure we have the capacity available to enforce and raise standards.

People should be able to expect good standards within the private rented sector with a greater degree of consistency, regardless of how strong the demand is for these homes. Access to private renting should also be available to anyone who needs it, including those in receipt of benefits or who might otherwise present as homeless. A strong private rented sector made up of good quality homes benefits the whole community.

Empty Homes

Empty homes are a wasted resource, and we need to do more to make best use of this resource to bring them back into residential use. An empty property is defined as a residential property that has been unoccupied for six months or more. The Council's Revenue and Benefits team monitor the overall number of empty homes and the length of time they have been empty. We will need to employ a range of

measures working with partners and also property owners to bring their properties back into use to meet housing need and demand.

Making best use of our affordable housing stock

The need and demand for social housing is considerable and this is reflected in the number of households on the housing registers operating cross West Northants. With three housing allocation schemes operating due to legacy LA policies, as a new unitary we need to adopt a consistent, effective and fair approach in how we allocate social housing stock. As part of this work

We will work in partnership to drive up standards, stay compliant with changing regulation and have a consistent approach to the allocation of a social housing. As a strategic authority we will enable the delivery of these goals by creating the right expectations and conditions for both the Council and our partners to act.

Theme 2: Our priorities

- 2.1 Deliver high quality services and standards to residents in social housing, and ensure residents are empowered to have a voice to help shape their local environment
- 2.2 Influence the private sector to improve standards and access and ensure safe homes for all
- 2.3 Have a consistent approach to the letting of social housing across West Northants

Theme 2 - Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services

Theme 2: What do we plan to do

2.1 Deliver high quality services and standards to residents in social housing, and ensure residents are empowered to have a voice to help shape their local environment

- We will create a Housing Partnership Board made up of strategic registered provider partners to share performance information and enable closer working to drive improvements for residents.
- We will work with Registered Providers who meet the Regulator's requirements and can demonstrate they offer high levels of customer satisfaction.
- We will work with NPH to deliver planned investments to maintain the quality of Council's homes.

2.2 Influence the private sector to improve standards and access and ensure safe homes for all

- We will commission a new stock condition survey to ensure that the Council understands and can focus its service delivery informed by the quality and standard of accommodation in West Northants.
- We will encourage sustainable and resilient communities by having targeted enforcement services that address rogue landlords and poor practices to ensure better standards of housing in the private rented sector.
- We will conduct a full review, look at options for selective licencing and pursue landlords of unlicenced houses in multiple occupation (HMO's).

- We will review the licensing scheme prior to its expiry in January 2025 to ensure that its objectives have been achieved and implement further additional licensing if supported by the evidence base.
- We will improve conditions on the private rented sector by implementing actions arising from HMO licencing responsibilities, our formal and informal enforcement interventions and our grant and loan work.
- We will work in collaboration with the Revenue and Benefits team in bringing empty properties back into use by working with property owners and where necessary take appropriate and proportionate enforcement action.
- We will strengthen the forum for private landlords so landlords can keep up to date with their legal duties and sources of help and support.
- We will support tenants facing eviction from their private rented homes, ensuring that evictions can only be undertaken on legal grounds, and that landlords seeking to exploit poor practices are targeted by enforcement services.

2.3 Have a consistent approach to the lettings of social housing across West Northants

- We will develop and implement a new West Northants Housing Allocation's Policy
- We will explore ways to make best use of the Council's housing policies for the allocation of homes



Theme 2 - Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services

Theme 2: How we will measure our progress

We will monitor the following areas and report back on an annual basis to track our progress:

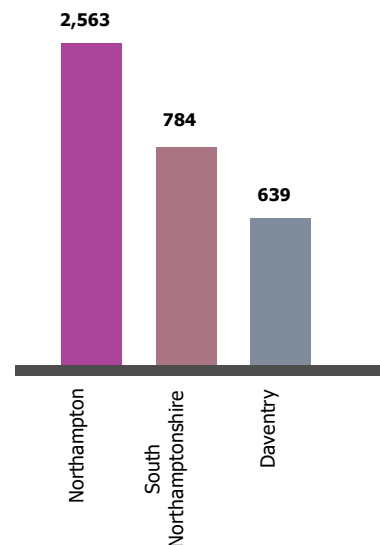
Private Landlords	The number of enforcement notices served on private landlords
Good repair standard	RP and Council homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard
Housing Allocation's policy	The approval of a new West Northants Housing Allocations Policy (by April 2024)

Theme 3 - Supporting residents to live safe, healthy, independent and active lives

Context

Good quality affordable housing is a cornerstone of any community, but to deliver thriving neighbourhoods, health and support services need to work alongside the right kind of housing provision including housing for older people, children living in or leaving care, housing that supports people with learning and physical disabilities, travellers and people escaping domestic abuse.

The pandemic has also brought into focus the importance of housing and how our homes are critical supporting people to live well, work, feel safe and take part in community life. However, for some, their home can be challenging and contribute to poor physical and mental health, whilst others may be experiencing homelessness or live in homes that have disrepair or a lack of security.



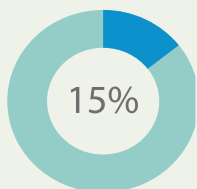
A network of services also means a network of providers. This strategy aims to bring partnership working to the fore and to leverage the contribution which each individual organisation can make in a way which delivers more than the sum of its parts. The Council play's a key role in understanding different needs across the area, enabling joint working and identifying opportunities to come together to solve challenging social issues relating to the everyday experience of living in your home.

Theme 3 - Supporting residents to live safe, healthy, independent and active lives

Creating the right services for the future

The Health and Housing Care Act 2022 is reforming the health and care system by bringing together geographically based partnerships to plan, co-ordinate and commission services. In effect this means creating hubs where housing, health, older people's services, adult social care and care leavers are brought together through locally integrated services.

To do this effectively, our plans need to be underpinned by an evidence base which clearly maps the different needs at a local level. This information can then be used to tailor accessible services at a local level to meet individual needs in a person-centered way. This work will form the basis of a new Supported Housing Strategy.



of people are living with a disability

One of the key outcomes of this strategy is how we engage and reflect the voices of people with lived experiences and provide opportunities for them to get involved in decisions that affect them with an aim to ensure that the services we deliver are both relevant and of value. Done in the right way, we can expect to see a reduction in health inequality, improved health and wellbeing across the wider population as well as reduced duplication and inefficiency at the point of delivery.

Reducing demand for health services

We know that people experiencing homelessness have far worse health and care inequalities than the general population. During the pandemic, local authorities, health services, and the voluntary and charity sectors worked in partnership to respond to homelessness, including the 'Everyone In' initiative. This showed that with appropriate funding, integrated working and systems, there are opportunities for positive change.

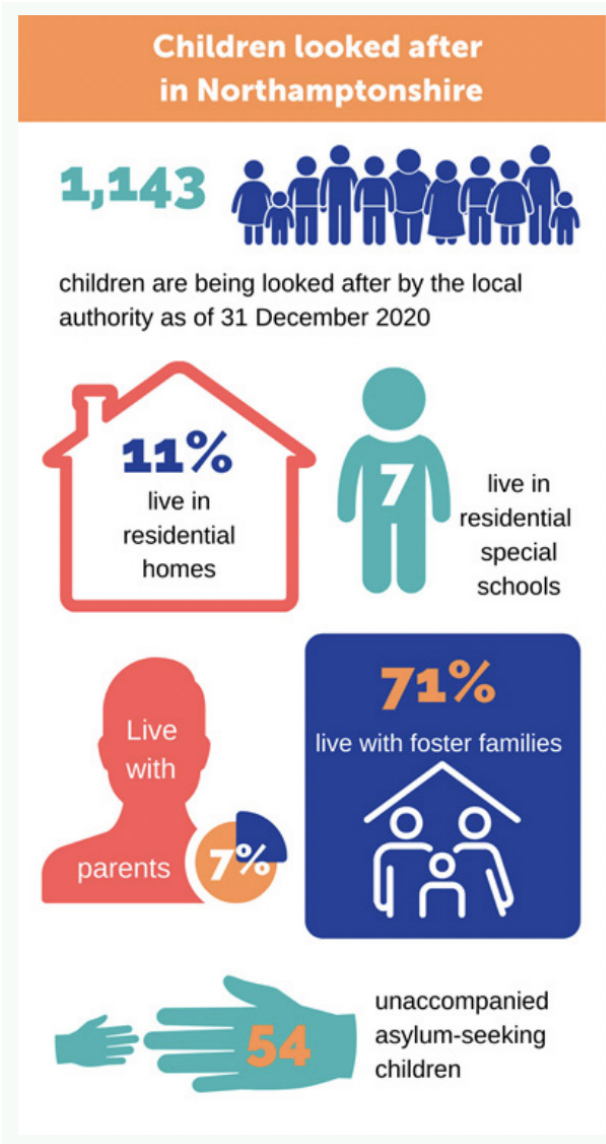
For this group and many others however, we need to have a better understanding of the impact on local primary health care and acute health provision so that we can identify opportunities for prevention which cost less in the long run. Through this work we will help statutory and voluntary sector organisations and housing providers to identify solutions using a multi-disciplinary approach and develop a more upstream prevention-based approach to homelessness.

This needs to be reflected in our commissioning role and reflects the approach set out in existing arrangements like the Commissioning Strategy for People with Learning difficulties.

We also need to ensure that the development of effective and integrated housing and health responses to an ageing population supports older people to return to their homes and provides practical assistance to reduce the likelihood of falls by, for example removing hazards or installing adaptations in the home to prevent hospital admission.

Similarly, the needs of young people need to be planned for in co-ordination with the Children's Trust and others to ensure access to housing for groups like care leavers who come from a range of situations and with varying needs that need to be addressed. Below is a snapshot of children currently being looked after.

Theme 3 - Supporting residents to live safe, healthy, independent and active lives



Theme 3: Our priorities

3.1 The effective integration of housing, health, adult social care, and the Children's Trust to deliver enhanced person-centred outcomes for all

3.2 Ensure that residents who require specialist housing provision have access to homes and support services that allow them to live independently in an area that is right for them

3.3 Develop services around the needs of residents by involving them in the process of shaping and commissioning housing options, services and support.

3.4 Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in a way that delivers positive long-term outcomes for each individual

Theme 3: What we plan to do

3.1 The effective integration of housing, health, adult social care, and the Children's Trust to deliver enhanced person-centred outcomes for all

- We will bring together teams from different disciplines including housing, health, adult social care and others to work out of the same locations close to the communities they serve
- We will map the different needs across the area to enable commissioners and providers to plan joined up service provision for the future
- We will create opportunities for collaboration and joint working to tackle areas where services cross over

3.2 Ensure that residents who require specialist housing provision have access to homes and support services that allow them to live independently in an area that is right for them

- We will assess levels of need for different types of supported housing and related services in order to identify the gaps in provision
- We will set up commissioning group for young people's accommodation in partnership with Northamptonshire Children's Trust to look at future provision for young people and people leaving care
- We will review housing for older people including low demand and 'end of life' supported housing and care homes and make recommendations for re-provision that also support related issues like hospital discharges

Theme 3 - Supporting residents to live safe, healthy, independent and active lives

- We will, in collaboration, develop a Supported Housing Strategy
- We will continue to meet the demand for adaptations to assist older and disabled people to remain living independently in their own homes

3.3 Develop services around the needs of residents by involving them in the process of shaping and commissioning housing options, services and support

- We will develop consultation mechanisms for residents to feed into the provision of specialist housing and support services for their local area
- We will increase awareness of the range of front-line services and support available to residents
- We will review our advice and information systems to ensure residents are enabled and empowered

3.4 Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in a way that delivers positive long-term outcomes for each individual

- We will complete a review of Homelessness and complete a new West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- We will reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and improve the provision of temporary accommodation to ensure it is managed well, of a high quality and standard and is affordable
- We will develop integrated pathways in partnership with Housing, Adult Social Care, Health and the Children’s Trust that reduce the risk of first time or repeated homelessness

Theme 3: How we will measure our progress

We will monitor the following areas and report back on an annual basis to track our progress:

Temporary Accommodation	The reduction of the number of households in temporary accommodation
Resident engagement	NPH Resident satisfaction that their views are taken into account
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	The approval of a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (by April 2024)



Theme 4 – Support thriving and sustainable communities

Creating the right services for the future

In line with the United Nation’s agreed Sustainable Development Goals, the Council seek to bring together a sustainability programme that covers social, economic and environmental issues. Housing sits at the heart of all three of these areas and in many ways forms a strong link that binds them together.

It is critical therefore that the provision and management of housing plays its role in helping deliver the overall sustainability goals the Council are seeking to achieve.

The UN sustainability goals:



Within the environmental aspect, the council are also seeking to out-perform the Governments 2050 targets by signing up to the UK100 pledge which commits us to having net zero emissions by 2030 and to have the same for all residents and businesses by 2045.

The Government produced a policy document in October 2021 ahead of the COP26 summit in Glasgow that December, 'Build Back Greener', which outlined their strategy for Net Zero. The document outlines their ambition to have all homes achieve an energy rating on their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of level C by 2035. The introduction of Energy Company Obligation (Eco4) will support delivery of this ambition through targeted financial support for homes in energy efficiency rating bands E, F, and G. The table below shows that there is a lot of work to do to achieve level C for West Northants.

Area	Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Ratings (% of properties)		
	C+	D/E	F/G
Daventry	49	48	3
Northampton	49	50	1
South Northants	54	43	3
England	48	49	3

Theme 4 – Support thriving and sustainable communities

Future rounds of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) as well as initiatives aimed at the private rented and home ownership sectors will further aid delivery of this ambition. Initiatives to reduce carbon emissions in homes included heat pumps, hydrogen ready boilers and insulation backed with clear, easy to follow advice. The planned investment of Council homes delivered through NPH has focused on improvements to thermal performance, safety and security, comfort and well-being of residents. Successful funding bids through SHDF has enabled the scope of planned investment programme to be optimised into a whole retrofit programme for a selection of properties, so far 150 properties with a further 429 as part of SHDF wave 1, with the aim of improving energy efficiency.

The Government also set out plans for a standard relating to new build homes that will reduce emissions by 31% compared to the current standard. This is due to be a regulatory requirement by 2025 through the Future Homes Standard.

Work has been undertaken within the Council to map the activities and measures of the Council against the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 associated targets. We plan to establish baseline data in many of these areas so that we can monitor progress and further align our actions with these goals.

The Role of Housing within Sustainability

Social – The UN sustainability goals include 1. No Poverty, 3. Good Health and Wellbeing, 4. Quality Education, and 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. The chances people have in life can be enhanced for those on lower incomes through access to a secure home they can afford which allows children to have a

settled education and the wider family access to employment and support networks. These things can be made possible through provision of the right kind of housing in the right locations.

Environmental – The UN sustainability goals includes 12. Responsible Consumption and production and 13. Climate Action. The construction of new homes is critical in ensuring sustainable materials are used and that the design of homes allows for high levels of energy efficiency, re-cycling and biodiversity. Similarly, the way we manage, repair and refurbish our homes contributes to these outcomes either directly or through our supply chains.

Economic – The UN sustainability goals includes 8. Decent work and Economic Growth and 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. High levels of employment are only achievable if the local housing offer gives easy access to work and is affordable in relation to local wages. Aligning the housing needs of sectors like keyworkers in health and education with the local housing market will greatly enhance how well the local economy works, increasing the number of economically active households and generating more money in a local circular economy. Many local Housing organisations also work with their residents to increase the numbers in training and employment through a range of interventions.

Theme 4 – Support thriving and sustainable communities

Delivery

This theme supports some of the other themes including support for residents and the quality of homes. As such, we will ensure that as we work with partners to deliver this strategy, we will include sustainability within delivery plans as an integral part of overall delivery as well as identifying specific sustainability targets. There is a lot of work to do in this area and as baseline information becomes available, we will be able to prioritise and align actions with achieving the goals we have signed up to.

Theme 4: Our priorities

4.1 Contribute to achieving the pledges as set out in the Council's sustainability strategy

4.2 Improve the energy performance of homes within the social housing sector

4.3 Have a positive impact on the energy performance of privately owned homes and homes in the private rented sector

4.4 Support thriving local economies and communities by linking local employment with suitable housing opportunities

Theme 4: Our priorities

4.1 Contribute to achieving the pledges as set out in the Council's sustainability strategy

- We will continually review data coming out from the Council's work on sustainability to inform our priorities and work collaboratively to deliver the maximum impact when achieving our stated goals.

- We will work with Northampton Partnership Homes to develop and deliver a specific response to sustainability which aligns with the UN goals.

4.2 Improve the energy performance of homes within the social housing sector

- We will consider bids for future rounds of funding such as Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding from the Government and others in order to reduce emissions across all housing markets.
- We will work with local registered providers and Northampton Partnership Homes (who manage the council's homes) to support the investment in homes to bring them up to an EPC rating of C or higher.

4.3 Have a positive impact on the energy performance of privately owned homes and homes in the private rented sector

- We will actively build relationships with developers who have a good track record on sustainability and are seeking to achieve ambitious progress in reducing emissions in new build homes as part of our role in local planning. This includes the use of MMC (modern methods of construction) to improve the quality and air tightness of new homes.
- We will effectively promote and administer Government grants available to all tenures.

Theme 4 – Support thriving and sustainable communities

4.4 Support thriving local economies and communities by linking local employment with suitable housing opportunities

- We will undertake a review of opportunities to provide key worker accommodation in partnership with the local NHS Trusts.
- We will work with the Regeneration team to identify the optimum delivery of housing to aid in the regeneration of our towns and communities.
- We will seek to maximise the opportunities for local construction jobs and apprenticeships through the delivery of council backed housing developments.

Theme 3: How we will measure our progress

We will monitor the following areas and report back on an annual basis to track our progress:

Energy performance	Percentage of NPH and RP homes with an EPC rating of D or lower
Funding	Number of NPH homes benefiting from central Government funding aimed at reducing carbon emissions
Grants	Number of private individuals benefiting from grants aimed at increasing energy performance of homes administered by WNC

Bringing the Strategy to life

In order to have effective delivery of the strategy, we have identified three principles that need to be adhered to. By keeping focussed on the following three areas, we will be able to achieve greater impact and stronger foundations for the future.

The delivery principles

Principle one: Partnership working

Partnership working is a critical thread running through the strategy as without this we will not be able to tackle the big challenges which lie ahead. The Council sits at the centre of a wide range of stakeholders who need to come together and deliver outcomes that link back to the priorities set out here. The council will create the leadership and conditions needed to for this to happen. This will include communicating the strategy, creating the right forums for collaboration, bringing together disparate groups and linking together complementary strategies across the Council.

Principle two: Fairness and consistency

Recognising and respecting diversity is key to everything the Council does. Fairness in areas like access to housing, distributing limited resources and targeting issues that affect some groups more than others like poverty and support forms part of the approach set out here. Ensuring fairness is however also about consistency where it matters and as the three legacy Authorities become integrated over the life of this strategy, we will have new and consistent use of policy.

Principle three: Financial resilience

Tackling the scale of the issues which face us will require some different solutions. As we innovate service models, explore new products and work with new partners we will always make sure that we minimise financial risk and carry out the necessary due diligence to ensure our activities as a Council are not loss making. Maintaining our financial strength will enable us to do more in the long term and continue to provide critical services for people who need them.

Delivering the Housing Strategy

This high-level strategic document highlights the priorities for the Council and high-level plans to deliver them. An operational delivery action plan will be developed with SMART actions which will be regularly monitored and reviewed. This will be developed after the strategy has been adopted and in collaboration with partners.

Monitoring of the Housing Strategy

The delivery action plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by officers and on an annual basis the delivery plan will be presented to Cabinet and People and Place Overview & Scrutiny committees to update on progress and outcomes and will feed into our annual budget process. In addition, the Health and Wellbeing Board and its remit around the wider determinants of health will also contribute to the implementation and progress of this strategy on an annual basis.

