

North Northamptonshire **Housing Strategy** **2025-2030**



North
Northamptonshire
Council

Foreword



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The housing crisis takes many forms, and the challenges we face in North Northamptonshire needs solutions that fit our own local circumstances. The continued impacts on affordability, homelessness, private sector housing standards and rough sleeping, increasing demand and pressure on the housing waiting list, and reductions in house building, shows that current policies and practices are not adequately tackling the issues.

In addition, there are many other challenges, including but not restricted to, the barriers facing young people trying to set up their first home, or older people looking for better choices to help them stay living independently, and even families wanting somewhere stable to put down roots but can't because their short-term tenancies in the private rented sector don't allow that. Alongside this, improving standards in all sectors of housing.

We also need to identify ways in which we can reduce the energy demands of our homes and all other buildings, to meet our ambitious plans for delivering a net zero carbon neutral region no later than 2050. This will include having supporting infrastructure in place as our region grows. We therefore need to think in a more holistic and joined up way to address how we as a local authority and with our strategic partners and stakeholders, can address these prominent issues.

This work is well underway and was launched as the Councils 'Big 50 Future Vision' at a partnership conference in July 2024. It considered what our opportunities are, what our challenges are and looking ahead. The opportunities showed that we live in the heart of England, which is great for access to the rest of the country. Businesses want to be here; you can reach 63% of the UK population within two and a half hours by road from North Northamptonshire, which means that the highest employment of the area relates to Transport, Logistics, Wholesale, Retail and Manufacturing. And local commuting opportunities to places like Birmingham, Leicester, London, and many more are within easy reach.

North Northants also has a plethora of green spaces and waterways, making it attractive for leisure and tourism. However, there are notable challenges such as skills gaps – 29.4% of residents have a level 4 qualification as compared to the England average of 43.1% and 5.5% with no qualifications as compared to the England average of 6.4%.

Other challenges faced in North Northamptonshire are:

- We have areas of deprivation.
- Rural Transportation gaps
- Infrastructure not keeping up with growing population.
- Educational attainment disparities with the rest of England

Looking ahead we also need to consider our changing industries, the increasing cost of public services, our aging population, and the climate crisis. All of which can impact housing need and delivery as well as be impacted by it.

This Strategy considers the Big 50 future vision and other impacting visions, priorities, plans, policies, practices, and legislation within its design, ensuring that it helps to deliver a consistent approach to finding solutions to their overlapping issues and maintaining partnership that can deliver on those solutions.

As this is a Housing Strategy, safe, decent, and affordable housing is its core priority – to ensure that current and future homes meet the needs and aspirations of current and future residents.

We want to take a new approach to tackling the housing crisis, to ensure our housing solutions address the needs of all our residents: from those who are homeless or threatened with being homeless; to those who are living in substandard housing that need to be brought up to the modern standards; through to delivering homes that meet the aspirations of the people who will help drive our economy forward.

We need to embrace new models for delivering the homes and communities we need, maximising the potential of modern methods of construction and assistive technologies in our homes, as well as championing community-led housing initiatives. At the same time, we are committed to campaign for freedoms and funding tools to help us find a better balance between the interests of developers, landowners, and communities, to challenge and address viability where it exists to achieve the growth and housing delivery promoted within the Council's Local Plans, Environmental Plans, and national expectations.

This Strategy, the first full strategy since vesting day, April 1st, 2021, – sets out what we need from our current and future housing needs to meet the challenges and issues with today’s housing. We want to ensure that we can support housing need and demand so that everyone can have access to a safe and decent home, which is affordable to their individual income.

We want to do housing differently, so in putting together this strategy we have created a model of co-production involving wide consultation with partners in both delivery and support, residents, and staff. Through an extensive process of ‘workshops and regular debate with lead politicians and stakeholders, we have worked through key issues to see where and how a collective North Northamptonshire local approach can add value through collaboration. It is only with the combined voices and efforts of these stakeholders that a comprehensive, holistic, and detailed framework could be put together reflecting the complex nature of housing need across our region.

Consultation Feedback:

Below are some of the main priorities and feedback that came out of those consultations:



100% of residents surveyed said that there needs to be more affordable housing made available to meet the needs of residents and the growing population.



14% of residents said that Keyways gives them the ability for a better view of what available for everyone. to see



57% of residents said that suitability and quality of housing was an issue.



14% Services for sheltered housing is an initiative that works well.



29% of residents said access to community services: Doctors, Dentists, Town Centers, Shopping precincts, Libraries, Sports Facilities, Youth Centers, Community Centers, and other community facilities and amenities is challenging for them.



14% of residents said that there are unsuitable environments surrounding social housing (litter, safety, parking etc.)

Part of our Strategy’s remit will be the development of a North Northants definition of affordable housing delivery. North Northamptonshire Council’s Local Plan and the Joint Core Strategy’ policy 28, includes the commitment to deliver between one and two thousand new affordable homes annually. Since that commitment started in 2011/12, to date it has been 95% attained. Up to 2030/31 that commitment remains to deliver a further 20,448 new homes, which is an average of 2,556 homes to be delivered annually, which if the current fiscal climate remains will be a serious challenge.

We will work with partners and central Government to implement these plans but need to acknowledge that financing and viability will have a direct effect on our ability to deliver the change and impact we, partners, and the Government, aspire to achieve. To implement some of these plans we will need to have a different, stronger partnership with Government and partners in both the private and public sectors of housing support and delivery, to have a more co-design and control over areas, and a place-based approach to housing, health, and welfare, if we are to drive forward with our vision for North Northamptonshire.

Some of these issues could need decades of sustained effort to really resolve. As a council, we pledge to do all we can through working with our public and private partners and stakeholders to maintain these visions for change. But we know we will only succeed with the help, support and commitment of local communities, landlords, housing associations, developers, investors, landowners, the construction sector, utilities, central Government and many more.

We look forward to working with you all to deliver our dynamic, community focussed housing plan for North Northants, taking an integrated, place-based approach to driving growth and addressing social and economic inequalities.

And in everything we do, we seek to involve the people of North Northamptonshire fully. That is why we will be setting out a Delivery Plan to accompany this strategy, to show the detail of how we intend achieve our ambitious plans to tackle the housing crisis for the many, not the few and make us and our partners accountable for this work.

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Consultation and engagement

The Housing Strategy brings together in a single document the various elements that make up the council's strategic housing function. The purpose of the Housing Strategy is to identify the key housing issues and challenges facing North Northants over the next five years and to set high level aims and objectives across the full range of housing-related areas.

The Housing Strategy and its Delivery Plan has been developed and prepared in collaboration with the relevant service areas within the Council, the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE), Professional Stakeholders and residents, to ensure that the housing related themes and issues relevant to the delivery of all aspects of housing are reflected in the strategy and inform the priorities and areas for actions set out in the Delivery Plan.

Ongoing engagement with Housing Provider and Delivery partners, Homes England and Planning will continue through the life of this strategy. This will be done through progression and monitoring of the delivery plan and will be an evolving process.

This strategy is a major policy item for the council. It sets out its priorities, commitments, and delivery Programme for the period 2025 to 2030 for a wide range of housing matters, including:

- How we will Support Sustainable Growth and Regeneration in North Northamptonshire.
- How we will Increase the supply of homes which people need, can afford, and prevent homelessness.
- How we will raise housing quality standards in existing and new homes to support health and wellbeing.
- How we will meet the need for accessible and adapted housing, supported accommodation, and housing for specific groups.



Monitoring and Review

To monitor the progress of the Housing Strategy and its Delivery Plan regular reviews will be undertaken, and an annual report will be produced and published commencing one year after the date of the strategy's adoption.

The report will include:

- Performance against the Delivery Plan for each of the four priorities.
- A profile of new risks and opportunities which impact on the council's ability to deliver its housing agenda including any significant national legislation or local policy changes.
- New initiatives that support the priorities of the strategy so that the delivery plan grows and evolves as some actions are completed and new ones arise.

Setting the context

This section highlights some key national and local housing-related policies, strategies and plans that inform our housing agenda and underpin the priorities of the North Northants Housing Strategy 2025 to 2030.

National Context

This Housing Strategy has been developed in the context of changing and evolving national policy and legislation in housing, welfare, and planning. Below is a summary of the key legislative changes of recent years and some proposed legislative changes that are relevant to the housing sector and shape our response to meeting housing needs and demand in North Northamptonshire.

Existing and Changing Legislation

Extension to reduced suitability rules for new arrivals to the UK: Reduced requirements for the suitability of homeless accommodation apply to people who make a homeless application within two years of their arrival in the UK. Local authorities are not automatically required to consider the effect of the accommodation's location on these applicants, with an exception for some caring needs. This Order extends this rule to 1 June 2025.

The usual rule limiting use of bed and breakfast to six weeks for people with families' commitments does not apply for new arrivals. This Order confirms this exception ended on 1 June 2024.

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) (Amendment) Order 2024

New rules on complaint handling for social landlords - From 1 April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code is a statutory requirement for social landlords. The code introduces timescales for acknowledging and dealing with complaints, as well as a requirement for a 2-stage complaints process.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 requires the Housing Ombudsman to monitor social landlords' compliance with the code.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

New powers for Regulator of Social Housing: New regulations bring into force some provisions of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

From 1 April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing has new powers to require a registered provider of social housing to prepare a performance improvement plan. Other provisions from the Act also come into effect, including the removal of the 'serious detriment' test from the consumer standards for social homes.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Commencement No. 2 and Saving Provisions) Regulations 2024

Care and support charges - Local authorities have powers and duties under the Care Act 2014 to provide care and support to relevant adults. An authority can charge for meeting these needs, but it cannot leave a person with an income below a specified amount.

These regulations set the minimum levels from 6 April 2024.

The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into effect in April 2018 represented a fundamental change to homelessness legislation. It introduced new duties around preventing and relieving homelessness. The act extended the period during which a person can be at risk of homelessness from 28 days to 56 days. This required local authorities to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage.

The act also requires local authorities to provide homelessness advice and support to all applications for housing assistance and make inquiries to see if they have a duty to help. This is a change from the previous duty where local authorities only had to help those at risk of homelessness if they considered them to be in priority need.

Changes to Government's Departments and Delivery Agencies

In 2018 as part of the government's bid to raise the profile of Housing, the Department for Communities and Local Government was renamed Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) was rebranded as Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) was created as a stand-alone body. In September 2021, the MHCLG was renamed to become the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) "to help deliver on the government's mission to level up every part of the UK as we build back better from the pandemic and deliver on the people's priorities".

However, since the current Government came into power, the following announcements were made that would impact housing delivery:

[Housing targets increased to get Britain building again](#): 31 July 2024

An overhaul of the planning system to fix the foundations and grow the economy.

[Full Devolution across the North](#): 22 September 2024

The government is continuing to deliver devolution for all corners of the country, with a commitment to deliver full devolution across the North.

[Renter protections closer as bill progresses through parliament](#): 9 October 2024

Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner will put the Bill to overhaul renting before MPs today which will end Section 21 'no fault' evictions.

[Thousands of new homes to be built as part of the government's plans to get the country building again](#): 29 October 2024.

[High Street Rental Auctions will give businesses and community groups a 'right to rent' long-neglected town-centre commercial properties](#): 12 November 2024

Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 and 2023

A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) released by Government in July 2018 broadened the definition of affordable housing to include a range of products aimed at providing affordable routes to home ownership including starter homes, discounted market sale and rent to buy. The Definition of affordable housing for rent was also expanded to include affordable private rent which is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision in a Build to Rent scheme.

In December 2023 following a consultation process a further revised NPPF was published. This removed the requirement for Planning Authorities to continually demonstrate a deliverable five-year housing land supply. The updated NPPF states that local planning authorities will not need to meet this requirement if their adopted plan is less than five years old and had identified "at least a five-year supply of specific, deliverable sites at the time that its examination concluded."

Homes England Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2021 -2026

Homes England announced that grant funding provided through the Government's Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 can now be used to fund replacement homes, alongside new affordable homes, as part of wider estate regeneration plans and to help bolster the affordable housing sector and maintain housing supply. Previously, affordable housing funds were limited to new-build projects. AHP can also be used on replacement homes as part of estate regeneration if schemes are providing additional new affordable homes.

All schemes must start on site by 31 March 2025 and will need to complete within the AHP's current timeframes. The updated guidance reiterates Homes England's commitment to affordable homeownership as a priority.

First Homes

The government First Homes scheme was launched in June 2021 and is a policy that aims to provide discounted homes to first-time buyers in England who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford to purchase a home. To be eligible for the scheme you must be a first-time buyer and purchase a home in your local area as your sole occupancy.

The First Homes policy requires that a minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions in S.106 agreements should be First Homes. However transitional arrangements allow for the delay of implementing First Homes until the implementation of a new Local Plan in certain circumstances.

The Rough Sleeping Strategies 2018 and 2022

The Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 sets out the government's vision for halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it entirely by 2027. In September 2022, the government published a refreshed rough sleeping strategy "Ending rough sleeping for good".

The strategy has four key themes to end rough sleeping which are prevention, intervention, recovery and a transparent and joined up system. This was also accompanied by a further £2billion investment over a three-year period into policy and schemes to end rough sleeping such as Housing First and the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory definition for domestic abuse for the first time and placed a duty on local authorities in England to provide safe accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children. The Act amended homelessness legislation so that all eligible victims of domestic abuse that are homeless because of domestic abuse are regarded as being a priority need under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.

Social Care White paper (2021)

In 2021, the government published their 10-year vision for adult social care in England. The Health and Social Care White Paper highlights the importance of an integrated approach to meeting people's day-to-day health and social care needs and the government's aims and proposals regarding, amongst other things, housing adaptations and the Disabled Facilities grant (DFG).

The principles of the paper "Providing the Right Care, in the Right Place at the Right Time" provides for individuals to have choice over their housing arrangements which play a crucial role for achieving positive outcomes. This could be in the form of a new home or their existing home, purpose designed or not to meet their needs and have access to technologies and adaptations.

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023

The Social Housing Regulation Act received Royal Assent in July 2023 and is now officially law. The Act aims to improve the standard of social housing in the UK. It includes increased regulation for social landlords and new rules for the protection of tenants in their homes against serious health and safety hazards. It will require social landlords to investigate and fix hazards, such as damp and mold, in their homes within strict time limits for tenants.

The intention of the Act is to enable proactive regulation to improve these standards and provide tenants a voice that ensures that social landlords are held accountable by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act 2023

Supported accommodation describes a range of housing types, such as group homes, hostels, refuges, supported living complexes and sheltered housing where residents receive support to help them live independently.

The Act is aimed at improving conditions in exempt supported housing and came into force on 29th August 2023. Its aim is to raise standards of providers of supported accommodation and allow action to be taken against below standards providers. The detail of the act will be developed through Regulations that will be subject to consultation. It is expected that the regulations will be implemented within 18 months of the date of enactment.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURA) received Royal Assent on 26th October 2023 and is now law. The LURA intends to change the planning and regeneration system in many ways by putting local people at the heart of development. It will now be easier to put Local Plans in place and future Local Plans will be limited to 'locally specific' matters with general policies set out in a suite of National Development Management Policies which will have regard to climate change.

Local Planning Authorities are now required to develop design codes for their entire area that will set out where homes can be built and how they will look. It is important to note that the provisions it contains will require a raft of secondary legislation and further consultation before coming into effect.

The Act makes provision for a new Infrastructure Levy that will replace the s106 and CIL regime, but it is anticipated that the new Infrastructure Levy will take several years to enact.

Future Homes Standard

The Future Homes Standard is an energy efficiency standard that comes into force in 2025. The key purpose of the standard is to significantly reduce carbon emissions. Homes constructed under the future home's standard should produce 75-80% less carbon emissions and deliver homes that are zero carbon ready so that homes built under this standard will not need retrofitting to become net zero.

Ahead of the Standard coming into effect, a technical specification will be consulted on by the DLUHC, with the necessary legislation introduced in 2024, ahead of implementation in 2025.

The Renters (Reform) Bill

The Renters Reform bill aims to change the law to provide a better deal for renters and landlords in the private rented sector. Following the publication of the government white paper "A fairer Private Rented Sector" in June 2022, the Renters (Reform) Bill was published on the 17th of May 2023. In October 2023, the bill received its second reading, and the House of Commons deliberations of the Bill completed on 28th November 2023.

The amended Bill will now proceed to the next stage, and it is likely that changes will continue to be made. No confirmed date has been provided for the implementation of the proposed bill however the government has stated it is the intention for it to be in place before the next general election.



Local context

This Housing Strategy links with several corporate strategies and plans and reflects the housing related priorities and actions identified within them. The starting point for the strategy is the Corporate Plan 2021 and our Big 50 Future Plans work that was launched in 2023, which sets out at a high-level the aspirations and vision of the council.

These documents were developed in response to unification and the financial pressures / challenges that this brings whilst navigating the cost-of-living crisis, a global pandemic, and the resulting impact this has had on our communities and support services. The corporate plan provides a shared long-term vision for North Northamptonshire and looks to change our approach to public service with a greater emphasis on innovation and working in partnership so that we are better able to manage demand as well as help and support people before they reach crisis point.

The six key commitments of the corporate plan are:

1. **Active, fulfilled lives:** We will help people live healthier, more active, independent, and fulfilled lives.
2. **Better, brighter futures:** We will care for our young people, providing them with a high-quality education and opportunities to help them flourish.
3. **Safe and thriving places:** We will enable a thriving and successful economy that shapes great places to live, learn, work and visit.
4. **Green, sustainable environment:** We will take a lead on improving the green environment, making the area more sustainable for generations to come.
5. **Connected communities:** We will ensure our communities are connected with one another, so they are able to shape their lives and the areas where they live.
6. **Modern public services:** We will provide efficient, effective, and affordable services that make a real difference to all our local communities.

These commitments all support the vision of creating and maintaining 'A place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life,' and good quality affordable housing will be a pivotal part of delivering these commitments.

The work and commitments from North Northamptonshire Council and its partners through this and every strategy, plan or policy produced, and process or action committed to, is underpinned by the strong values that we work and live by, referred to as CREST Values, where we as a council will be:



Customer-focused by thinking as one team and acting council wide, by taking ownership and doing the right thing, by keeping customers up-to-date and informed and by listening and responding to differing needs.



Respectful by embracing and living the council's values, listening to, and valuing the contribution of others, sharing ideas and feedback at all levels and by promoting diversity and inclusivity.



Efficient through challenge, innovation, collaboration, and shared learning, having a flexible and proactive approach, prioritizing need, and seeking learning opportunities.



Supportive by building an open and sustainable culture, promoting achievement and success, being caring, empathetic and developing ourselves and others.



Trustworthy by acting honestly and with integrity, building effective relationships, doing what we say we are going to do and being open and transparent.

Population and growth



As of 2021, there were 348,000 residents living within the 378 square miles of north Northants.



Projected growth is principally estimating a 15.1% growth in population to 2041. Source ONS.



North Northamptonshire consists of the four boroughs of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough and all associated villages and rural areas.



Our residents are hugely diverse.



Our residents are living in approximately 168,326 homes across North Northants.



There are currently 26 ward areas



North Northants population has grown over the last 20 years and the number of households living in the area has increased by nearly 33 thousand, from 117,285 in 2001, to 150,136 in 2021 according to census data.



This is equal to a 28% rise in households for North Northants over a 20-year period, which is significantly higher than the 15.8% rise for England.



Despite this growth, our productivity for delivering new homes remains below the level expected whilst growth continues at a pace, seeing an average of over 1600 new households every year since 2021, with this level of growth projected through the span of this strategy and beyond into 2043.

Our housing stock

What we do know from [existing data](#) is that overall:



6.99% of households in North Northamptonshire are rented from the local authority.



8.23% are rented from a housing association.



16.55% are privately rented.



A significantly higher proportion of the market is owner-occupied, at **66.22%** of households



which is lower than the proportion of households in **West Northamptonshire (66.38%)**



and a higher proportion than **England (62.32%).**

North Northamptonshire Council uses the Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme to manage its housing register for social and affordable housing nominations and data shows that:



25% of the eligible and active applicants on that register have a medical housing need



of which **6%** is a severe or urgent medical need



23% need for ground floor level access accommodation



19% need level bathing facilities



4% need accommodation suitable for a wheelchair

Therefore, we need to find ways to ensure more homes across all tenures are energy efficient and comfortable to occupy if we are to maintain independence and to improve the quality of life for older households.



North Northamptonshire Council is both a stock holding Authority as well as having a Housing Development Team who seek to build new housing stock to replenish that lost through the Right to Buy. Our Housing Department provides full housing management services to



over 8000 council owned properties



108 general fund owned properties used for homeless services and temporary accommodation



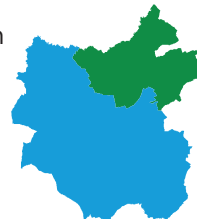
800+ sheltered housing properties



915 leasehold properties

The two property services teams are responsible for the Council's **8,280 homes:**

4,624 within the former Corby area



3,656 within the former Kettering area



Our properties have an average rent of **£137.07** and the majority of these homes are based in the Corby and Kettering areas of North Northants.



But our Registered Housing Partners, who collectively own **16,500+** homes level up the social housing gaps in the East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough areas, as well as having homes in all four areas and their surrounding villages.

There are some major differences between the stock of the two former Councils:

Year	Corby	Kettering
Pre 1945	516	973
1945-64	1983	1368
1965-74	1130	494
Post 1974	995	815
Unknown		6
Total	4624	3656

Our housing stock

The table below shows the break down of the Council's housing by type of general needs housing stock:

Type of property	Number of bedrooms				Total
	One	Two	Three	Four+	
Flats-Low Rise	1,384	784	48	1	2,217
Flats-Medium Rise	366	301	121	15	803
Houses	26	1,134	2,621	264	4,045
Bungalows	513	459	44	0	1,016
Total	2,289	2,678	2,834	280	8,081





The Council also runs the Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme, which is responsible for nominating applicants in need of housing to both the Council's vacant stock and the vacant stock of our partner Registered Housing Providers. Below are the annual lettings from that scheme for 2023/2024, by priority need band.

Annual Lettings 2023/24	Adapted Property	Bungalow	Flat/ Maisonette	House	Grand Total
Band A	37	35	276	258	606
Band B	68	92	203	173	536
Band C	9	28	78	33	148
Band D	0	0	8	0	8
Band E	0	0	16	5	21
Grand total	114	155	581	469	1319

As you can see there are over 24,500 properties between the Registered Housing Partners of North Northants but with only 5.4% becoming available in 2023/2024, with an average of 6000 people on the Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme, need is not being met.

Housing Mix

Suggested Percentage
Mix of Housing
Northamptonshire

	1 	2 	3 	4+ 
Market	5-10%	35-40%	35-40%	15-20%
Affordable Home Ownership	15-20%	45-50%	25-30%	5-10%
Affordable Housing Rented	30-35%	35-40%	20-30%	5-10%

Derived from various sources

As of 2021/22 there were around 863 identified HMOs in North Northamptonshire. Typically, HMO properties are converted larger homes; as a result, family housing is being used for typically single people and couples. This can be problematic as Families are projected to grow.

Number of dwellings by
property type and number
of bedrooms (March 2020)
– North Northamptonshire

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Not known	All
Bungalow	1,560	7,600	3,760	640	30	13,590
Flat/Maisonette	8,410	8,200	800	170	110	17,690
Terrace House	600	12,960	27,060	3,110	50	43,780
Semi-detached House	130	6,990	29,660	3,090	30	39,900
Detached House	60	1,100	13,270	21,560	130	36,120
All Flats and Houses	10,760	36,850	74,550	28,570	350	151,080
Annexe	-	-	-	-	-	260
Other	-	-	-	-	-	600
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	730
All Properties	-	-	-	-	-	152,670

Source: Valuation Office Agency

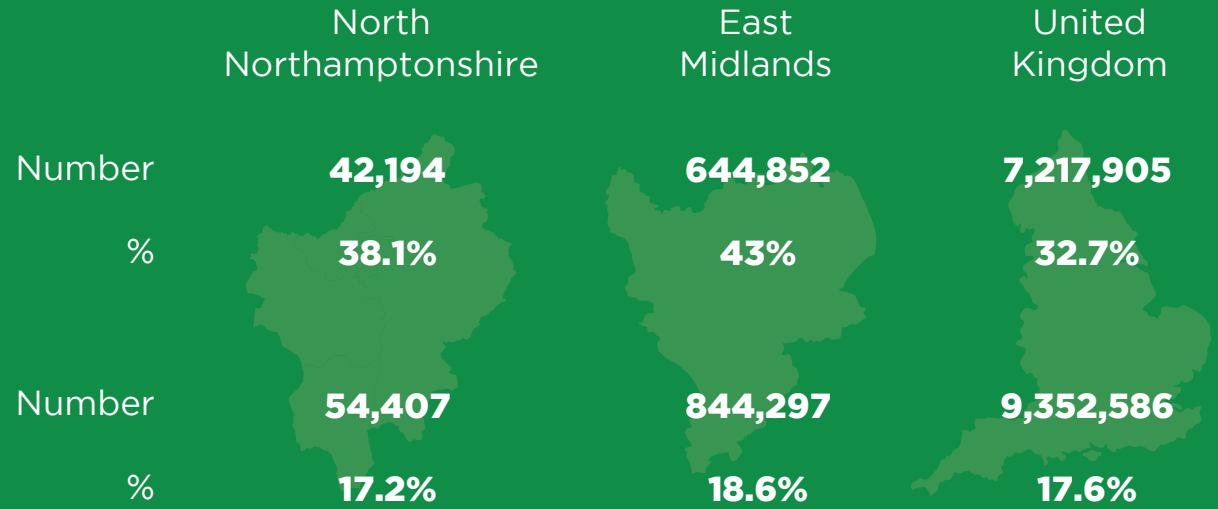
Housing Needs

Households and People with a Long-Term Health Problem or Disability, 2011

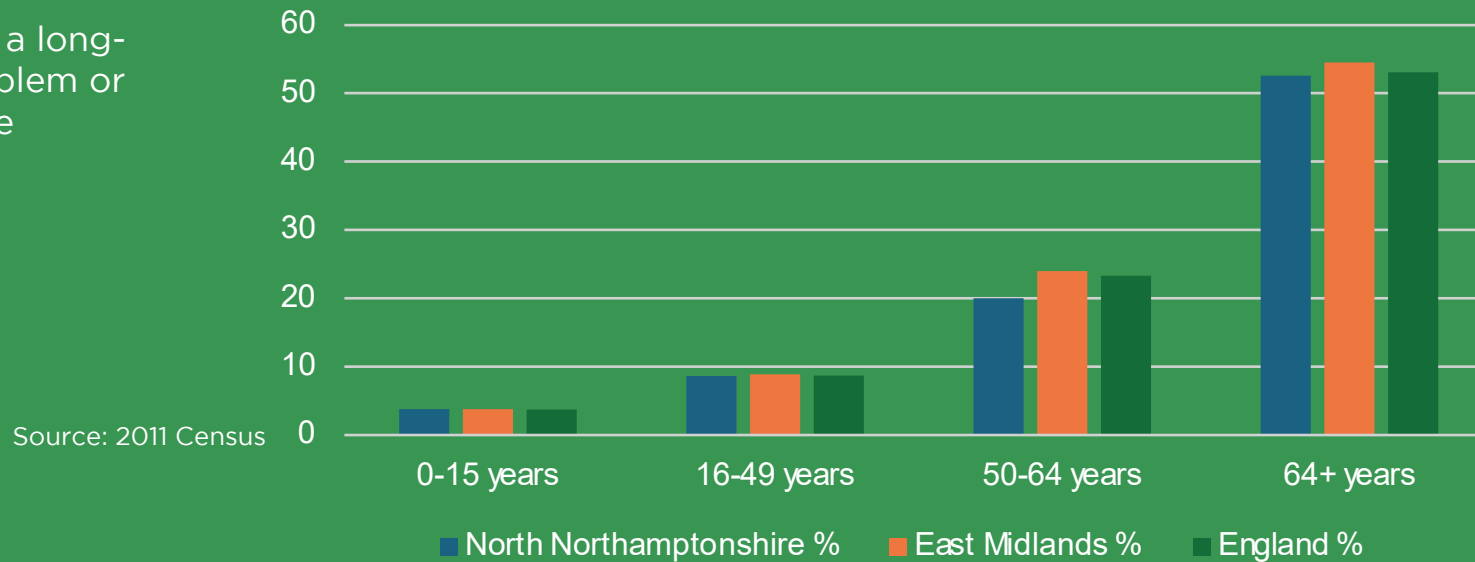
Households containing someone with a Health Problem

Population with a Health Problem

Source: 2011 Census



Population with a long-term health problem or disability by Age




Source: 2011 Census

17% of people have a limiting long-term illness in North Northamptonshire compared with 18% across England

Housing Needs

Central heating



2% of households lack central heating in North Northamptonshire

Compared with 3% across England

Homelessness

Evidence shows that people who experience homelessness for three months or longer cost on average:



£4,298
per person to NHS services



£2,099
per person for mental health services



£11,991
per person in contact with the criminal justice system.



£XXXX
per person living in Temporary Accommodation

This does not cover those unrecorded costs to Council's and other organisations for helping homeless people manage that situation, including for example, homelessness due to Domestic Abuse where refuge accommodation is used, so the issue is critical and growing.



During 2021/22, a total of 3,843 households approached the Council as homeless which was an average of 320 approaches per month.



During the following year, 2022/23, 4,778 households sought the assistance of the Council in relation to their housing situation which equates to an average of 398 approaches per month.



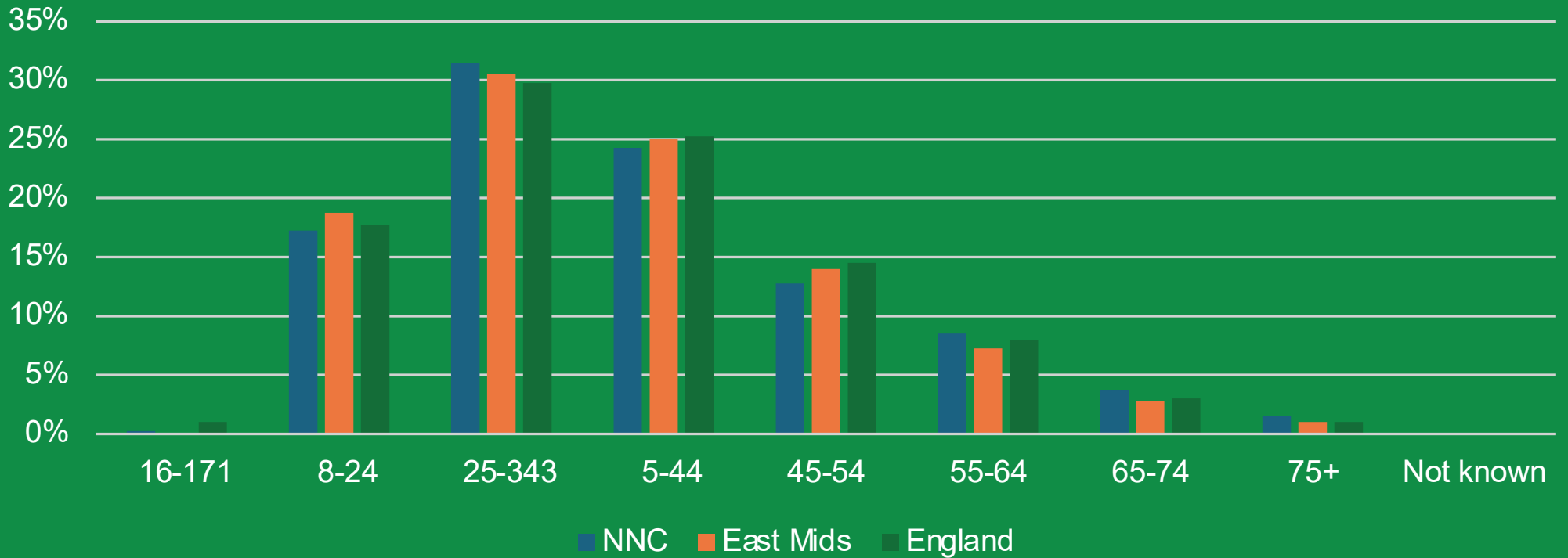
This represents a 24% increase in homeless approaches year on year highlighting the increasing costs to the Council as well as increasing demand on the service.

The top reason for homelessness is:

- Similarly to the rest of England, the 'ending of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector' has been identified as one of the leading causes of homeless,
- and locally 'family or friends being no longer willing or able to accommodate' is joins this as the top two reasons for homelessness in North Northants.

Housing Needs

Age profile of main homeless applicant



As you can see the largest group to experience homeless is 25 to 34-year-olds with 35 to 44 age groups following close behind

Population Diversity

By age



	North Northamptonshire		East Midlands	England
	Population	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage
Under 16	71,933	20.5%	18.5%	19.2%
16-64	212,908	60.8%	61.8%	62.3%
65+	65,607	18.7%	19.6%	18.5%
All Ages	350,448	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

	2021	2041	Projected change	Percentage change
Under 16	73,162	71,741	-1,421	-1.9
16-64	215,539	230,171	14,632	6.8
65+	67,533	100,556	33,023	48.9
All Ages	356,234	402,468	46,234	13.0

Religion

	Number	%	England Average
Christian	187,965	59.3	59.4
Buddhist	796	0.3	0.5
Hindu	3,971	1.3	1.5
Jewish	235	0.1	0.5
Muslim	2,569	0.8	5
Sikh	1,374	0.4	0.8
Other Religion	1,329	0.4	0.4
No Religion	97,516	30.8	24.7

Older Persons Population percentage, 2020



	North Northamptonshire	East Midlands	England
Under 65	81.3	80.4	81.5
65-74	10.6	10.7	9.9
75-84	6	6.5	6.1
85+	2.2	2.5	2.5
Total	100	100	100
Total 65+	18.7	19.6	18.5
Total 75+	8.1	8.9	8.6

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates

By ethnicity

	Number	%	England Average
White British	277,831	87.7	79.8
Non-White	20,962	6.6	14.6
White Non-British	18,058	5.7	5.7
Mixed	5,359	1.7	2.3
Asian	9,364	3	7.8
Black	5,325	1.7	3.5
Other Ethnic Group	914	0.3	1
Households with Multiple Ethnicities	8,367	6.3	8.9

Employment



The population of North Northants in 2021 has a working age population of 224,400.



This is 62.3% of the population, which is the same throughout the East Midlands and slightly less than the 63.9% nationally.

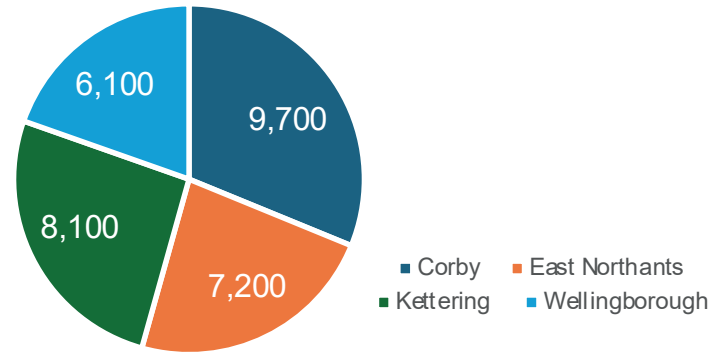


Whilst this is the greater portion of the population, it is still a concern as not all of the working population is in employment, with 9,915 people, who are considered to be work capable, making a claim for either Job Seekers Allowance or Universal credit, indicating that they are out of work, which equates to 4.42% of the working age population.

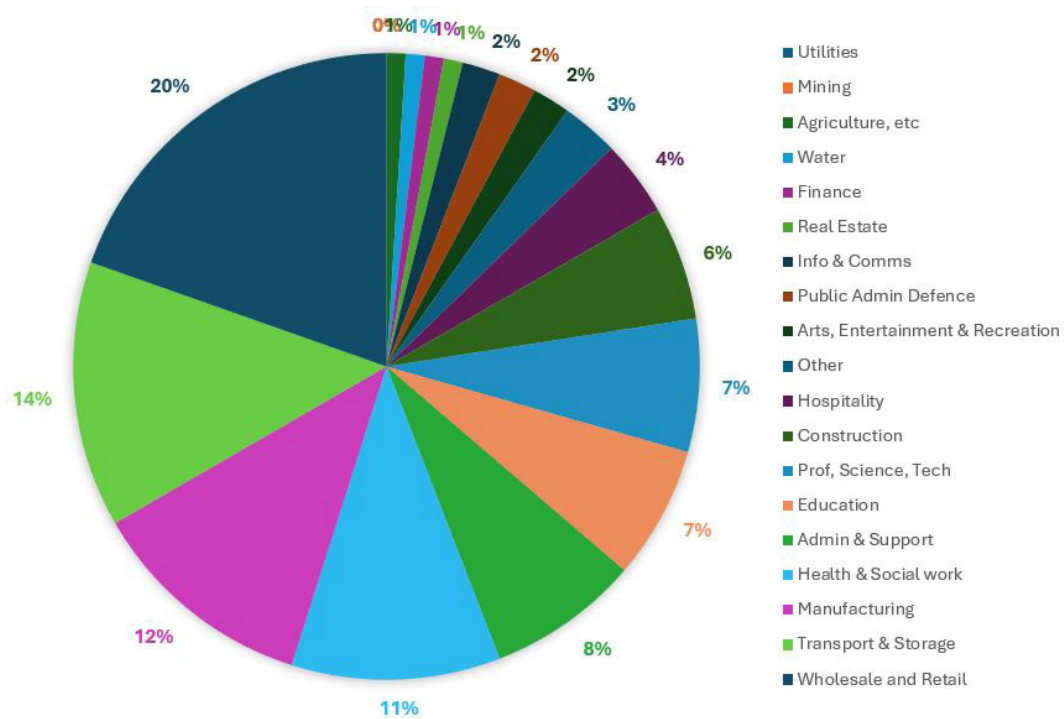


44% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in North Northamptonshire compared with 39% across England

Distribution of new Jobs
Net Job Growth (In all sectors) 2011-31



Jobs By Sector (2021)



Economy: Income and Fuel Poverty



Annual household income (Office for National Statistics 2017/18) £40,438 (England Average £43,996).



Annual household income, after housing costs (Office for National Statistics 2017/18) £27,295 (England Average £28,248).



Households living in 'Fuel Poverty' Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2020) 18,315 - 12.9% of households (England = 13.2%).



Median net equivalised household PAYE and benefits income (Office for National Statistics 2015/16) £24,192 (England Average = £24,577).



19% of households have no car in North Northamptonshire compared with 26% across England.

Community

Crime and Anti-social behaviour



The overall crime rate is higher than the average across England.

Neighbourhood



The % of people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood' (74.7%) is lower than the average across England (79.3%).

Education



24% of people have no qualifications in North Northamptonshire

Compared with 22% across England



15.9% of people have the highest qualification of level 1, equivalent to a single O-level, GCSE or NVQ



17.1% of people have the highest qualification of level 2, equivalent to five O-levels or GCSE



11.4% of people have the highest qualification of level 3, equivalent to two A levels



21.2% of people have the highest qualification of level 4 (degree), equivalent to degree level or higher

Big 50

The best life we want, not the one we are handed



This Housing Strategy links with several corporate strategies and plans and reflects the housing related priorities and actions identified within them. The starting point for the strategy is the BIG50 Vision for North Northamptonshire and the Council's own Corporate Plan 2021, which together set out at the high-level aspirations and vision of the council.

The Vision for the best life in North Northamptonshire in 2050 has been based around three key priorities under which sit the suggested goals for our Vision.

Vision Priorities

These have been created from our discussions with partners, where the aims for North Northamptonshire were to ensure that:

- Residents and businesses could prosper here.
- It was a place for everyone to feel proud of and safe in.
- And there was a need to get on the front foot to ensure everything works well.

Now we are using these goals to call people to action and create an environment where everyone with a stake in North Northamptonshire works together to create that best life.

BIG50 Vision Priorities:

Our key priorities – a proud, prosperous, and proactive place are set out below.

Proud Place

- Civic Leadership: Set a clear direction with strong ownership, which lasts longer than any postholder. Working beyond politics.
- Action: Set out a few key priorities to focus on and how they will progress, deciding what can be done now quickly and what will take more time.
- Strong partnerships: Keep bringing people together to build links, build on the partnership working from pandemic. Show how partnership can act not just talk.
- Community empowerment: Strong collaboration truly listening to and doing with the community, not to. Use underutilised spaces to bring community together.
- Safety/stake in society: Positive behaviours from residents with a stake in society who feel inspired by the future and raise their aspirations.

Prosperous Place

- Education and skills: Clear understanding of skills needed and links between employers and education, blended e-learning opportunities.
- Jobs: Public sector – an exemplar for apprenticeships and placements for local people.
- Transport: Fully electric travel, create mobile actions to bring services to people, have active travel routes, increased shared ownership of vehicles.
- Housing: Planned communities built on understanding of what people want, which encourage connection with neighbours and have necessary infrastructure, while protecting green space.
- Small / Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs): Support for entrepreneurs and small businesses to grow, a thriving community of new businesses.

Proactive Place:

- Equality: Listen to the diverse community in NN and ensure a range of voices are in the room.
- Prevention: Shift priority to prevention and ensure better access to care.
- Data: Map out the issues and understand where there is specific need we can meet. Continue to review and analyse.
- Joined up: Integrate services to work together for the person.
- Local knowledge: Tap into people with local knowledge, including Town and Parish Councils, to inform work.
- Connected communities: Ensure residents can connect with each other – in person and digitally.

Priorities

The following housing related priorities will direct where we monitor within the delivery plan that accompanies this strategy:



Build new homes across all tenures where people are proud to live



Improving the quality of the existing housing stock to provide decent, energy efficient and safe homes



Preventing homelessness to ensure everyone has access to decent, safe and secure homes



Supporting people to live healthy and independent lives in homes suited to their needs

This will include measuring the following:

- The number of new homes and affordable homes built in each budget year.
- Levels of homelessness, prevention, temporary accommodation.
- Quality and suitability of accommodation to meet need.
- Tracking progress against Local Plan
- Quality of Private and Social rented sector accommodation.
- Proportion of homes meeting energy efficiency rating D and above.
- Energy efficiency schemes of new and existing housing.

These outcomes have informed the priorities of the Housing Strategy and its Delivery Plan. They provide a benchmark for the actions and outcomes linked to each of the strategy's five core values:



Responding to the changing climate and market through innovation



Ensuring services are customer focussed with a person-centred approach



Enabling the right home environment for people's health and wellbeing



Improving service delivery through effective partnership working



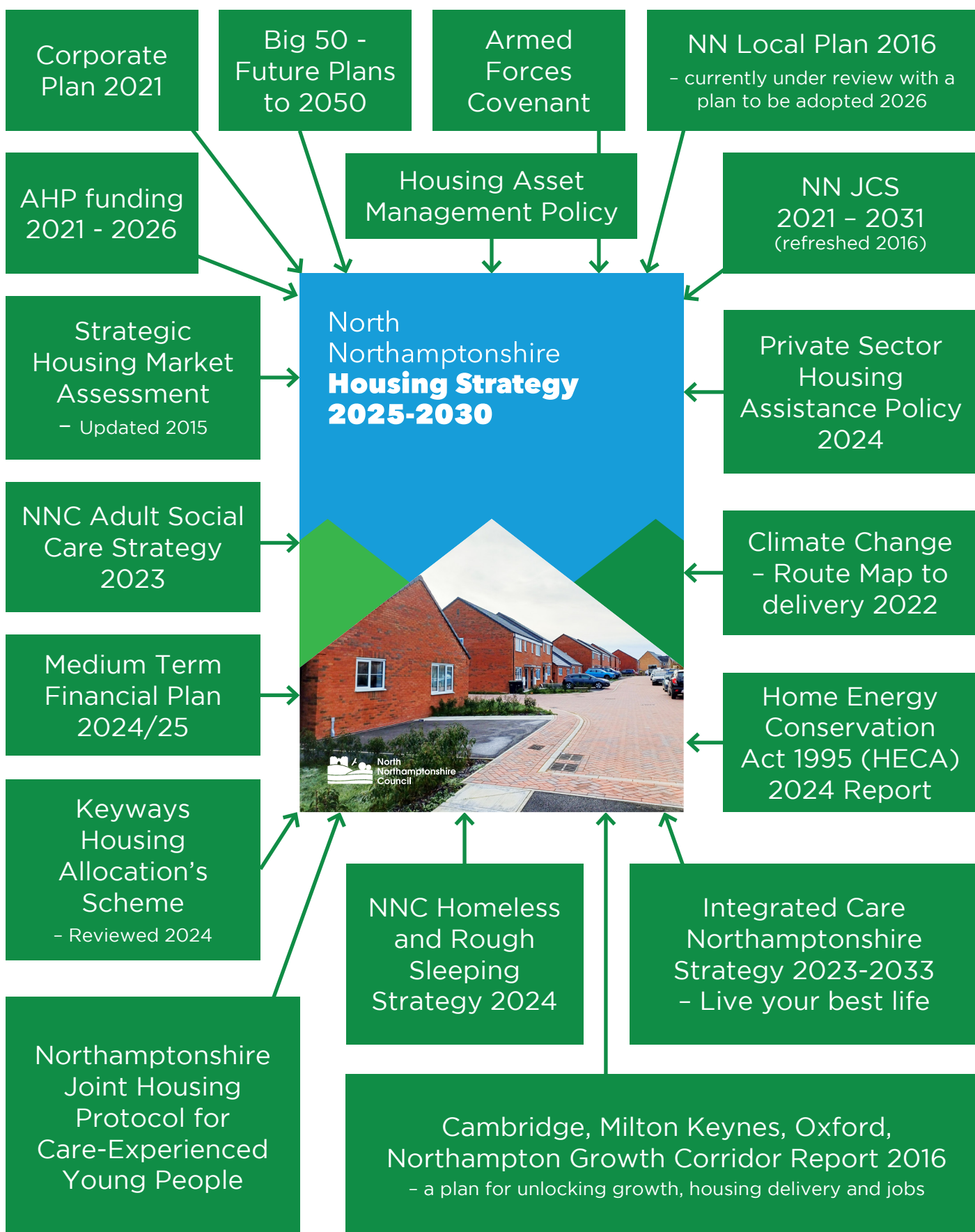
Maintaining value for money at all times.

There are many other council strategies and plans which are linked to delivering North Northamptonshire's housing agenda. This strategy brings together the housing related parts of other plans and strategies including the Local Plan, which is currently being reviewed. The Housing Strategy is not a planning policy tool but will be used as part of the evidence base to deliver new housing.

To ensure that the right kind of housing is built in the right place, the Local Plan will contain the policies used to determine planning applications and sets out locations for future development. The development of this Housing Strategy for North Northamptonshire has taken consideration of the emerging development of the Local Plan refreshment and promotes the production of a supplementary planning document to focus on housing need and affordability delivery based on local data. Both documents are major policy items for the council and play significant and complementary roles in achieving the inclusive and sustainable growth of our economy and the creation of healthy and safe places and communities that this council is working to deliver for North Northamptonshire.

This Housing Strategy will form part of the evidence base to support emerging Local Plans and therefore informs and plays a role in shaping the housing related policies of the future so that the housing agenda is aligned and prioritised.

The diagram below shows the strategies and plans that have informed and underpinned this Housing Strategy:



People and places

North Northamptonshire Council's Vision and Approach

Our Housing Vision briefly sets out the ambitions that we want to achieve for North Northamptonshire. **'A place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life.'**

We should all be able to live in safe, decent and affordable homes that give us a stable foundation for all that we want to achieve for ourselves and our families, and we know that warm, safe and secure homes help us ensure our population is healthier and supported to make the right life choices from early years to the end of life.

At the most fundamental level, our vision for North Northamptonshire is:

- That those of us in need, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless can quickly access affordable housing options so they can retain their place in the community; and
- That no-one will need to sleep rough in North Northamptonshire.

For the 168,326 existing homes that form our community, our vision is:

- For those homes to receive the investment they need to meet and exceed modern requirements for their safety, security, warmth, and physical accessibility. This includes retrofitting our existing homes to help meet our ambitions to be a carbon neutral area by 2050.
- That those homes will be part of neighbourhoods of choice, connected to economic opportunities and strategic infrastructure, and offering an excellent natural environment and quality of life for all parts of the community; and
- When we rent in either the social or private sector, that we can be confident that our homes will be professionally managed, safe, decent, and affordable.

For the new homes we need, our vision is that:

- We consistently deliver the right homes in the right places, and of the right type, providing the number and mix of new homes for the future needs of Northamptonshire.
- For the new homes we build to enhance the choice, affordability, quality, and variety of housing available in our neighbourhoods, and that they are accompanied by the transport, social and other infrastructure needed for their residents and the existing community to thrive, including schools, health facilities and green spaces.
- For the quality and design of new homes to mean that we can better match the housing supply to the future housing needs and incomes of all North Northamptonshire's residents; and
- For the construction industry in North Northamptonshire to be a centre of excellence and innovation, and an attractive employer for a new generation of skilled workers.

The right amount and design of homes, raises the standards for the area and helps its residents to live happier, healthier, more independent lives for longer than would otherwise be possible and that is the heart of this Council's vision.

Therefore, we need to address this, head on and together, if we are to achieve our ambitions to deliver a radical upgrade in the health and wellbeing of North Northamptonshire's residents. For some of us, specialist or supported housing could be the answer, but this will need to be balanced with well-designed, excellent quality non-specialist homes that will be able to meet the vast majority of people's needs both now and into the future. This must be at the heart of our approach as the aim should be to give all our residents positive and affordable housing choices that enable them to find a home that suits their requirements.

This intimate connection between housing and our wider quality of life means we must see housing as part of our broader work to provide integrated public services, centred around the individual, that effectively responds to and reduces demand at the neighbourhood level. The development of a new model of service delivery is a key ambition for North Northamptonshire Council and is central to achieving the ambitions set out in the North Northamptonshire Council's Adult Social Care Strategy through focusing on early intervention and prevention and a holistic view of the needs of people and place.

Health and Social Care

The health sector has a key interest in many housing issues. The health of older people, children, disabled people, and people with long term illnesses is at a greater risk from poor housing conditions and homelessness. The variable quality, choice and availability of homes is a driver of health inequalities, with those living in poverty more likely to live in poorer housing, unstable housing circumstances or lack accommodation altogether.

Unsanitary and unhealthy living conditions are a major long-term contributor to chronic health conditions, and lack of suitable supported or temporary accommodation prevents timely discharge of people otherwise ready to leave hospital. Unsuitable homes can be dangerous for residents in need of support, poor heating can lead to illness in winter, and vulnerable or older residents in need of support are prone to injury and preventable hospital admission.

In 2023 North Northamptonshire Council established an [Adult Social Care Strategy](#) that recognised the impact good housing can have on our health and wellbeing, to exploit the unique opportunity to work with our devolved Health and Social Care system to deeply embed the role of housing in joined up action on improving health.

Furthering North Northamptonshire Council's work on health and social care integration, we will commit to working to promote investment in housing from pooled budgets between local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

We will use these opportunities to influence development of new housing and communities with the right physical, social, and green infrastructure that promote healthy lifestyles and more specialist accommodation for those who require it, and to use the housing sector's workforce as key agents of behaviour change. Ensuring our existing housing stock is suitable, accessible, and fit for the future is integral to improving and maintaining our population's health.

North Northamptonshire Council sees this collaborative model, as being the potential key mechanism to bring together and develop the services and support available to vulnerable households across all tenures. In July 2024, it held its first 'Older People's Fair', where organisations came together to give advice and assistance with all manner of issues and requests. Housing was not a main feature of this event but can be for future events that will be planned. This model should form part of the responsive, integrated delivery of services for households whose needs are not being met and whose home is adding to the day-to-day challenges they face, but where often relatively minor interventions can make a major difference to their wellbeing and independence.

Age-friendly North Northamptonshire

We know that in future years North Northamptonshire will be home to a much larger and diverse group of older people, where nearly twenty percent of residents will be aged 65 years or older, and nearly a quarter of the population has [some form of health issue](#) that can affect the housing that is needed. Projections from census information report this number to grow exponentially. This brings a renewed emphasis on ensuring that a diverse range of housing is available to meet the needs of older people and households, recognising that issues like affordability and insecure rental markets impact on people in all age groups.

The way we plan, build, and organise in our area can help or hinder social connections. An age-friendly place will be a crucial resource for improving the lives of older people. We know that homes can be supportive of active and healthy living on multiple levels, and their design and layout can help people continue to carry out activities of daily living. The local environment can also provide opportunities for social contact, expand social networks, and enhance feelings of safety and support as well as provide access to green space and other opportunities for activity and recreation. Inside the home, research evidence suggests that falls can be prevented through adaptation and modification (preferably before a crisis has occurred), through tailored physical activity, improving levels of strength and balance, and adoption of assistive technology.

Homes will need to be more adaptable, and designed with potential care needs in mind, so that older people can remain in their homes if they wish as their circumstances change. Through the [North Northants Core Spatial Strategy 2008](#), we had set out specifications that all new dwellings will be capable of being adapted

to meet the needs of all people in line with the 'lifetime homes' standard in the North Northamptonshire area, to allow homes to be able to respond to the changing needs of residents. However, this has not been refreshed since publication and standards and data have been changed and updated since publication. What remains is that the population of older people in this area continues to grow and therefore this strategy prioritises addressing the housing needs for this population.

In North Northamptonshire, much of our existing housing does not meet the changing needs or aspirations of our older residents. We need to find ways to ensure that new housing is both attractive and within reach of those who wish to move, and that programmes are in place to support those who want to remain in their current homes. The need to explore diverse housing options for our ageing population requires us to move beyond our limited discussions about downsizing and towards delivering homes that properly meet living needs, in which improving older people's quality of life is the critical focus.



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

North Northamptonshire has witnessed some of the greatest population growth over the past decade, but alongside this we have seen growing inequalities, none as acute as the rise in rough sleeping and homelessness. Single people with no dependents made up 79% of those who approached in August 2024 and this level is consistent for the budget year of 23/24.

North Northamptonshire Council has a dedicated team to address rough sleeping in the area and this is supported by many initiatives and resources to address and prevent this situation. Regardless of this it was reported that although the overall number of rough sleepers has drastically fallen since a peak in 2018, the number of rough sleepers seen monthly fluctuates and was higher in 2022/23 than in 2021/22.

Most rough sleepers are male aged between 30 and 49 years and are UK nationals. However, almost a quarter of rough sleepers are non-UK nationals. The top three reasons for rough sleeping in North Northants are being evicted, drug or alcohol misuse and mental health problems and 69.7% of rough sleepers were found to have support needs with the main requirements for support being due to Alcohol / Drug misuse and/or Mental Health issues.

In North Northamptonshire Council we have a strong history of innovation and collaborative working to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and have achieved, through many great initiatives, a reduction in rough sleeping. This backed by the Corporate commitment to 'tackle the causes of complex problems such as poverty and homelessness' across North Northamptonshire will support our future endeavours to ensure no one is forced into a homelessness situation or to spend a night on the streets.

We have developed and published a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029, to drive this work forward. The Strategy will focus on the following 5 priorities:

1. Increase the availability of and access to suitable accommodation to meet local need.
2. Embed early and effective upstream prevention, reaching people earlier to reduce homelessness.
3. Support people to sustain current or find suitable accommodation.
4. Make rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring through a comprehensive and multi-agency Rough Sleeping Service.
5. Maximise opportunities for funding and collaboration to develop effective pathways and make the best use of resources.

This strategy is supported operationally by an established Homeless Forum of partners, in both the public and voluntary sectors, who each have a role to play in the prevention and resolution of homelessness. The Government's first national rough sleeping strategy set targets of a 50% reduction in rough sleeping by 2022 and the end of rough sleeping by 2027, but we hope to make faster progress.

Alongside this strategy, marks a significant escalation of our combined efforts to tackle these priorities. This is accompanied by a range of collaborative support to help people begin a journey away from the streets and to avoid that situation altogether.



A sample of the actions in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are:

1

- To develop and introduce a Private Rented Sector Scheme which includes financial and practical incentives to build effective relationships with landlords.
- To work effectively with Supported Housing providers in North Northamptonshire through the introduction of a dedicated single access panel

2

- To produce a Homelessness directory of services and support available in North Northamptonshire to achieve an increased awareness and encourage people to seek help earlier and work together effectively.
- To identify vulnerable groups at higher risk of homelessness and determine if and what targeted intervention is needed.

3

- To increase tenancy support and introduce tenancy training opportunities for households that require this level of support to maintain their accommodation.
- To introduce Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings for individuals with complex needs to ensure they receive the right support.

4

- To introduce a dedicated role to help with developing and building links with Supported Accommodation Providers

5

- To further develop the North Northamptonshire Homeless Forum to build strong partnerships and hold regular meetings to share learning and provide opportunities to work together.
- To work in partnership to develop a toolkit of prevention focused housing solutions

However, we need to promote prevention as the first response to homelessness and support the implementation of the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#).

Research shows the leading cause of homelessness is the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy and there are increasing concerns about the impact of benefit restrictions the private rented sector. Households who are unable to sustain tenancies are becoming homeless which is creating considerable costs to our local authorities in temporary accommodation in the private rented sector.

Traditionally, many of those households would have found a home with a social landlord, but because of the rising costs of private sector renting, the pressure to obtain social and affordable housing through the Housing Register is growing and demand and need has been far outweighing availability for a number of years now.

To add to this pressure, the under-supply of new social and affordable rented homes and loss of existing properties to the sector through Right to Buy, contribute to a shortage of vacant homes.

Given systemic challenges such as high personal and household debt and insecure low paid employment, we need to invest in reversing the decline in our social housing stock, to increase the supply of stable, well-managed homes at the right quality – and where long-term costs are less than providing subsidy to private landlords.

We are clear that, from a homelessness prevention viewpoint, structural changes are needed to provide more affordable homes, greater security of private renting and more support to those who need it, to help tackle the long-term causes of homelessness.

Supported Housing

We know that supported housing has an important contribution to make to many of the issues we have just outlined. Move on accommodation for those who have experienced homelessness or rough sleeping is one example, taking them further along the pathway back to a settled and stable future, while reducing demand on public services.

North Northants delivers several temporary accommodation units that support homeless people through to finding settled housing solutions. The number of our households in temporary accommodation has remained consistently above 230 each month from March 2023 to October 2023, with single adults and single parents with dependents making up many of these households.

These units of accommodation can manage a diverse range of needs for those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping and have a team dedicated to supporting tenants and transitioning through to more permanent housing solutions. Analysis continues into the future requirements of all client groups.

This is the first full North Northamptonshire Council Housing Strategy since the Combined Authority was established on the 1st of April 2021 from the four Councils of Corby, East Northants, Kettering and Wellingborough, and their associated parishes. From a history of co-operation and partnership working between these Authorities and the public, private, voluntary community and social enterprise sectors, North Northamptonshire Council has developed a unique approach to identifying and tackling, the issues that matter to the residents and businesses of this area. Because of that, we can bring together local solutions to meet local need and demand.

The strategy laid out in this document is the product of a model of co-production, involving extensive consultation with strategic partners in the public, voluntary and private sector. This included housing stakeholders, advocates, and residents. Content for this document has been collected through an extensive process of meetings, 'workshops and consultations'. It is only with the combined voices of these stakeholders that a comprehensive, holistic, and detailed framework could be put together reflecting the complex nature of housing need across the area of North Northants and influencing the priorities of this strategy.

In the Council's [Corporate Plan](#), the vision was set to make North Northants 'A place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life.' One of the six priorities in this plan 'Safe and thriving places' commits to 'improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand. Central to this new Housing Strategy is a recognition that housing is at the heart of many of the broader issues that North Northamptonshire Council, and its partners, need to tackle. The remaining five priorities, focus on Health, Carbon reduction, Tackling homelessness, Providing skills, and training to our residents and Growing our economy, whilst actively celebrating culture, improving travel, and making the North Northants area a place of choice.

As a pre-cursor for the more detailed picture drawn in this Strategy and taking on board other relevant strategies, plans, and policies both within the Council and within our partnering organisations, a Delivery Plan will complement this strategy. This will give a transparent view of progress to the public, to the political leaders, and to our stakeholders and partners alike.

For our neighbourhoods to be attractive places to live, work and invest, an integrated and connected approach is essential. North Northamptonshire Council is currently driving huge changes in the way its public services are delivered. Housing, in particular, is being redesigned to ensure that it can deliver better outcomes for our residents and tenants. A key part of that service transformation will focus more broadly on safe, decent, and affordable homes, as they are the essential foundation for the work, we do to help residents and manage the impact on health and wellbeing that a lack of housing causes.

Through the Big 50 Future Vision, we are committed to investing in our infrastructure and assets, both new and existing, to create the conditions for future growth. Good local transport connections and resilient social infrastructure are fundamental to improving access for all to the opportunities that growth will bring, and to the redesigned public services that we are working to provide. People want to live in places with great schools, good jobs, excellent transport connections, sport and culture underpinned by good housi

To achieve these goals, we need to accelerate the pace of housing development and improve the quality and choice of the housing offer in North Northamptonshire. New homes are an important part of ensuring we can meet the housing demands of existing and prospective residents, and enable reductions in dependency on expensive, reactive public services by better matching our residents' emerging housing needs. North Northamptonshire Council's partnership focus on Homes, Jobs, and the Environment will help to ensure we can provide the right homes in the right places, and that they will be part of sustainable, coherent communities for the future.

We should also remember that most of the homes we will live in by the end of this strategy period, 2030, are already built. Therefore, ensuring our existing housing stock is suitable, accessible, and fit for the future, is integral to improving and maintaining our population's health and happiness.

It is essential that we recognise community engagement, heritage and local identity, public realm, and cultural space within our plans. Community empowerment is central to the aims of this area's growth agenda. Within that context, this Housing Strategy aspires to present a vision for a dynamic, housing plan

for North Northamptonshire, juggling the competing questions of growth and development with respect for existing communities and demand for all forms of accommodation and multiple types of tenure. We should be seeking to actively empower people to play their part in the housing market, rather than seeing it as something they have no stake in or influence over.

This allows us to take an integrated, place-based approach to driving growth and productivity, addressing social and economic inequalities to ensure that the economy works for everyone. We will use this approach to engage with Government and our partners to create the right housing markets for the North Northamptonshire area's future.

This Strategy sets out in more detail the housing-focused elements of that approach, and the accompanying Implementation Plan will provide a more detailed, and a regularly updated, set of actions across the area. While we cannot fix everything at a Council level, we will do as much as we can to make it work better for the people of North Northamptonshire. This strategy will only be delivered through agreement and collaboration, not by a top-down imposed programme.

There is potential to adopt a common approach to more of the issues that we face - not for its own sake, but where there are practical advantages that could be unlocked by closer collaboration or consistency. We know that many residents and stakeholders do not live their lives within prescribed boundaries, so we need to make sure our evidence, analysis, policies, and priorities reflect their reality, and deliver services and housing to meet those needs, without undermining local approaches to local challenges. A comprehensive [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) has been prepared in part to inform the North Northamptonshire Council Local Plans, but also as a consistent foundation for this Strategy to draw upon. The next chapter of this Strategy briefly summarises where we are now in terms of housing, people, and place in North Northamptonshire. The strategy also flags up the need to influence and encourage change at both national and local levels.

Homelessness

[Evidence](#) shows that people who experience homelessness for three months or longer cost on average £4,298 per person to NHS services, £2,099 per person for mental health services and £11,991 per person in contact with the criminal justice system. However, this does not cover those unrecorded costs to Council's helping homeless people manage that situation, so the issue is critical and growing.

During 2021/22, a total of 3,843 households approached the Council as homeless which was an average of 320 approaches per month. During the following year, 2022/23, 4,778 households sought the assistance of the Council in relation to their housing situation which equates to an average of 398 approaches per month. This represents a 24% increase in homeless approaches year on year highlighting the increasing costs to the Council as well as increasing demand on the service.



Employment and economy

The population of North Northants in 2021 was 360,400, with a working age population of 224,400. This is 62.3% of the population, which is the same throughout the East Midlands and slightly less than the 63.9% nationally. Whilst this is the greater portion of the population, it is still a concern as not all of the working population is in employment, [with 9,915 people](#), who are considered to be work capable, making a claim for either Job Seekers Allowance or Universal credit, indicating that they are out of work, which equates to 4.42% of the working age population.

North Northamptonshire jobs by sector 2021:

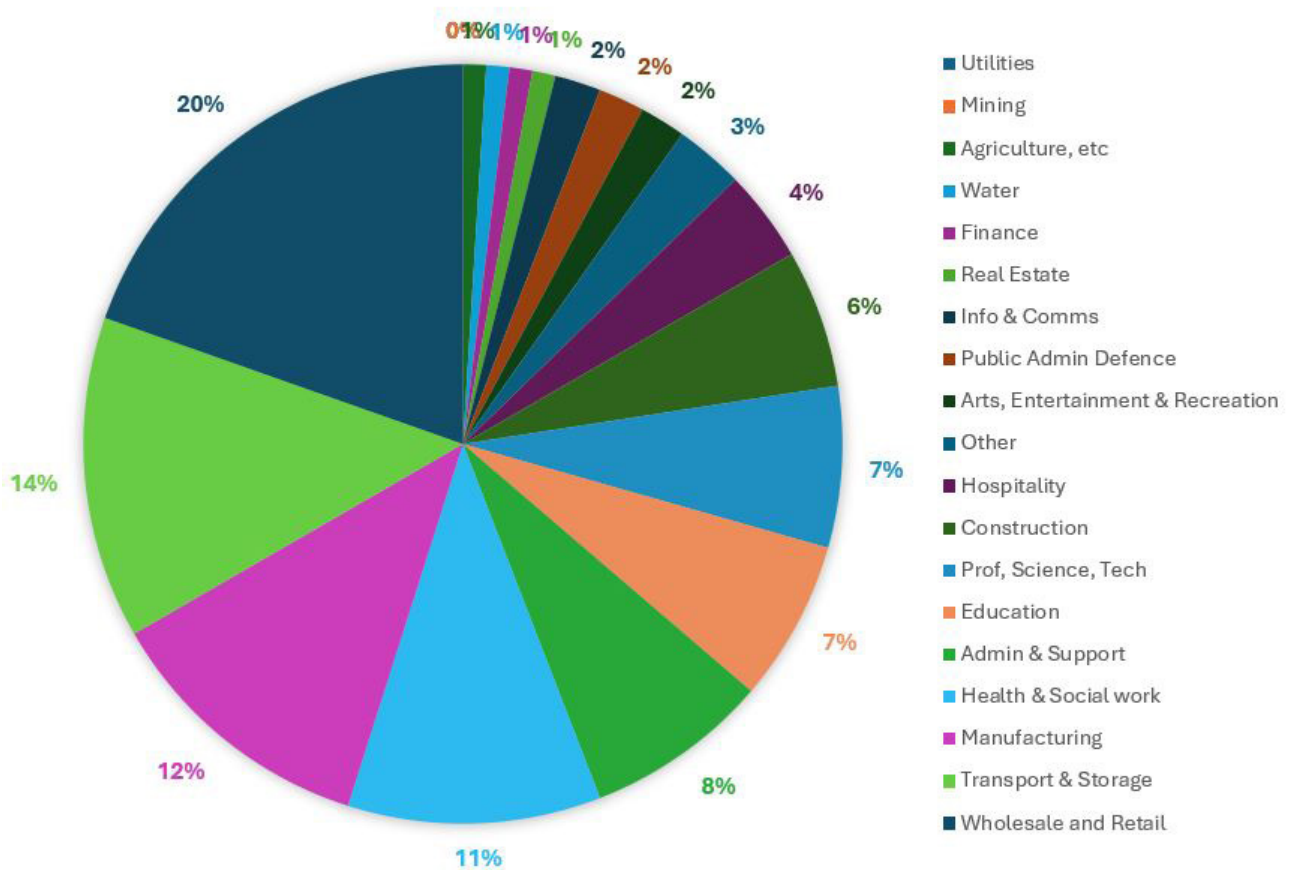


Table 6.2 Jobs By Sector (2021) Source: [Final Draft Report to Council](#) - Clean April 2023 accessible (1).pdf

Since 2001 the fastest growing sectors have been Transport and Storage, Professional, Scientific, and Technical sectors, both of which have grown by 4.5% per annum. In the last 11 years the growth in Transportation and Storage has accelerated.

North Northamptonshire Council has a decent supply of labour but other things like commuting must be factored in. The table below shows that whilst Corby is balanced in terms of in and out commute, the other areas have a significant imbalance in terms of outgoing commuters, particularly worthy of highlighting is East Northants, a predominantly rural area, where there is more than double of the population commuting out of the area for work.

	Corby	East Northants	Kettering	Wellingborough	North Northants
Live and work in Local Authority (LA)	18,120	12,593	20,545	13,549	-
Home workers	1,880	5,264	4,625	3,363	-
No fixed workplace	1,812	3,411	3,372	2,636	-
In-commute	9,189	10,053	13,987	14,954	-
Out-commute	8,967	22,383	18,622	16,956	-
Total working in LA	31,001	31,321	42,529	34,502	139,353
Total living in LA (and working)	30,779	43,651	47,164	36,504	158,098
Commuting ratio	0.993	1.394	1.109	1.058	1.135

The right housing offer can be an attraction for residents and to the economy of the area. It creates jobs in the construction sector as well as assisting with the health and wellbeing of the population. Growth in population also attracts inward investment into the infrastructure of the area. Increased population results in the need for more shops, transportation, education, medical facilities and so much more. However, with a projected growing older population any new inward growth needs to be targeted towards balancing the inhabitants of north Northamptonshire to ensure it can thrive economically and sustainably.

Issues

Despite surviving global issues and major regional changes through the unification of the four former local Authorities and the splitting up of County Council functions between the North and West of Northamptonshire, the area has not been immune to the economic restructuring that has accompanied globalisation, unification, and technological change. There are significant gaps for skills and employment and in line with trends nationally, levels of all forms of homelessness have increased in North Northamptonshire Council over the last five years. Similarly to the rest of England, the 'ending of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector' has been identified as one of the leading causes of homeless and locally 'family or friends being no longer willing or able to accommodate' is joins this as the top two reasons for homelessness.

New Homes

We have not been delivering enough new homes. For several years, we have not been fully hitting the targets set for delivering new homes to meet the growth demands of the area. This is for a few reasons, with the main one being hitting one fiscal crisis after another. The [North Northamptonshire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment](#) (HENA) published in July 2023, provides the evidence base for housing need, and mix as well as employment land which will inform local planning policy.

When looking at the need for affordable housing, analysis suggests that within the rental sector there is a need for 964 affordable homes per annum across the whole Council area. Therefore, the Council is justified in seeking more affordable rented accommodation throughout its market area. It would seek to see the delivery of these new homes through agreed programmes of delivery with developers and registered partners, including the Council's own development programme. However, whilst the HENA describes the mix of property sizes needed it does not go into the detail of the types of homes needed. That is because this is the information that live data sources such as the Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme's Housing Register will provide.

However, viability impacts delivery and regardless of the affordable percentage agreed on a housing development at planning, the fiscal climate can change from this stage to delivery and therefore provision of numbers and types of affordable home, become a moveable/changeable target. Developers focus on the housing market, ensuring that the properties delivered can be sold and so the private housing market trend are monitored in this way. So, to maintain their focus on affordable housing need, they look to the HENA for guidance and the Councils Housing Strategy for direction on need. Embedded within the implementation Plan that supports this strategy, is the methodology for determining local housing need and demand.

Empty Homes

Currently there is c 1,200 long term empty homes in the North Northamptonshire area. Whilst on the face of it this number is low in comparison with the number of properties in the area, bring them back into use will resolve the housing issues of a great number of residents.

To direct this work the Council has a Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy to determine the actions needed to take to get these homes back into use. It will be next reviewed in 2026, and we hope to be able to reduce this number significantly by then.



Home Ownership

Homeownership is the highest percentage of tenure in the area. However, within that includes homes that are owned and rented out to others through private rented - sole occupation and housing in multiple occupation (HMO). Over the past decade outright ownership has decreased, and private sector renting has increased. To address the balance back in favour of sole homeownership, affordable homeownership products are being marketed.

According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 'Affordable Housing' is defined as 'Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).' There are many examples of affordable ownership products that are discounted against market sales (generally up to about 20% of open market prices), including shared ownership, starter homes, and more.

These are marketed by developers and their housing partners, and in [2022/23 19%](#) of new housing delivery was affordable housing (382 out of 2,042). This is a growth in the 2021/22 delivery, which was 13% (205 out of 1,555). However, that is the gross amount of delivery and needs to be discounted by the number of affordable rented homes in this category. In 2022/23 delivery of the affordable rented homes reached 229, therefore out of the gross 382, only 153 were affordable ownership (40% of the gross delivery).

Whilst 40% is a reasonable portion of distribution, delivery itself does not currently meet growing need and there are no targets directing housing providers. This is partly due to the fiscal climate meaning that the viability of delivery has been compromised and partly due to this new organisation finding its feet.

Using the attached implementation plan, this is an issue that needs to be addressed and will be done through the collection of relevant data to accurately express need and create achievable targets.

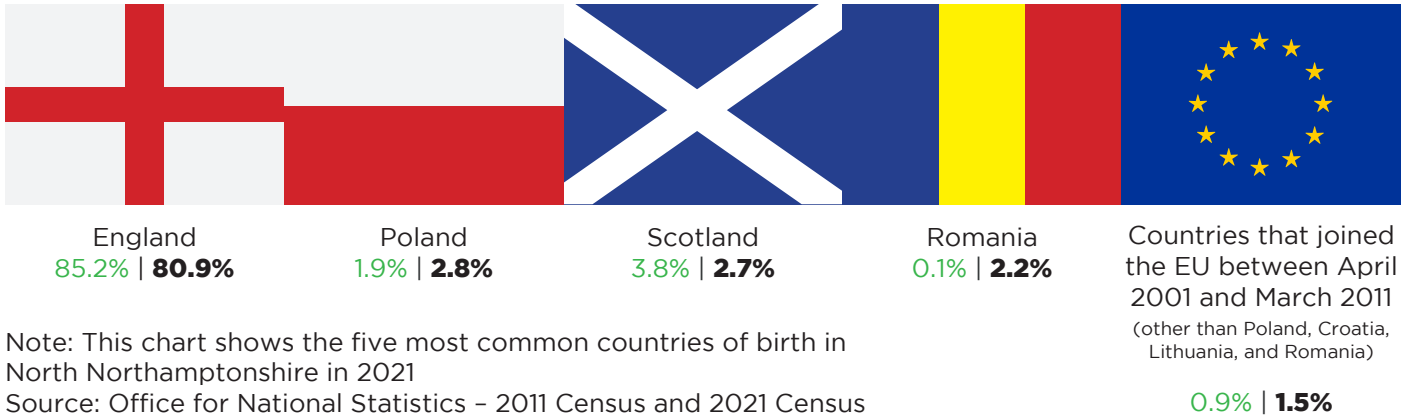
Ethnicity, equality, and diversity

Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of North Northamptonshire increased by 13.5%, from around 316,900 in 2011 to around 359,500 in 2021.

This means North Northamptonshire's population saw the second-largest percentage increase in the East Midlands, behind [Harborough](#) (where the population increased by 14.3%). The population of the East Midlands increased by 7.7%, while the population of England rose by 6.6%.

In 2021, 80.9% of North Northamptonshire residents reported their country of birth as England.

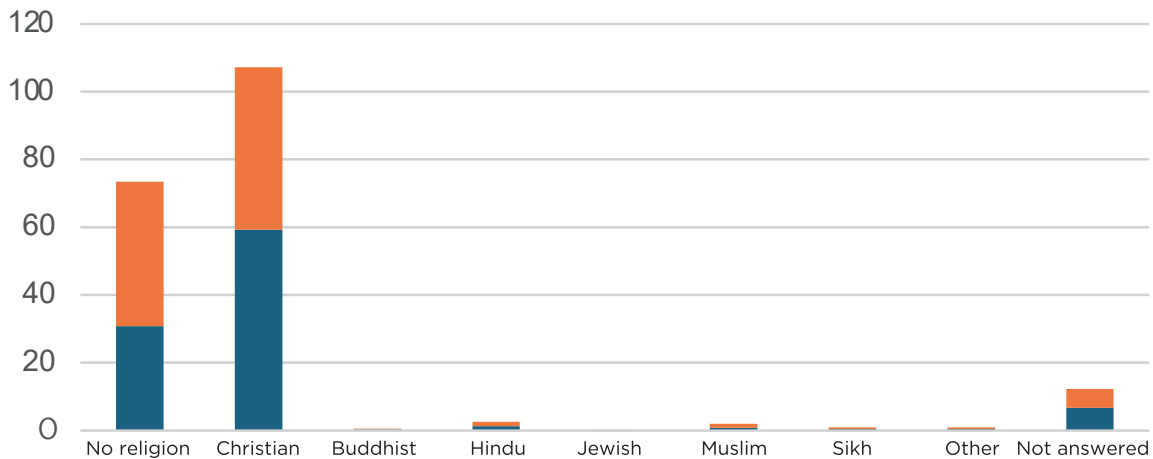
Percentage of usual residents by country of birth in North Northamptonshire between 2011 and 2021.



Note: This chart shows the five most common countries of birth in North Northamptonshire in 2021

Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and 2021 Census

Percentage of usual residents by religion in North Northamptonshire between 2011 and 2021:



Note: In 2021, 42.6% of usual residents in North Northamptonshire reported having "No religion".

Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

This indicates the changing diversity of the area and helps us to know and understand our communities and their cultural needs.

According to census data, in England it indicates that Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are less likely to own their home. The cause of this could be a few reasons relating to opportunity or desire. Nevertheless, this strategy will promote equal access to all housing products.

Social Housing decline

There has been a decline in home ownership in the area with the percentage of North Northamptonshire population who were homeowners reducing from 68.1% in 2011 to 65% in 2021. Also, the area has seen an increase in the percentage of the population who were renting privately to 18.4% in 2021 from 14.1% in 2011 demonstrating the need to ensure the Private Rented Sector in North Northamptonshire is accessible and providing decent quality accommodation.

Alongside of this the proportions of social housing have been decreasing since 2009 and currently stands at 5.2%, with around 95% of those rented at social rents (generally substantially below private sector rents). The relative decline of the sector is largely because of the Right to Buy, with over 420 social homes lost to the policy for North Northamptonshire Council since 2009 (data runs up to 2023, as at the 2024 figures this number has risen to 547).

We now have more than 6500 households in North Northamptonshire waiting for a social home and 33% of these households are identified in priority need for a social rented home, Bands A and B. There is a further 29% in Band C, which is the medium range of priority need. Twenty two percent of the Housing Register is over the age of 60 and 14% under the age of 20, meaning over a third of the register is in the vulnerable age group category. There is 40% of the register in need of family housing and over 50% of the register has a disability. Housing need is on the increase, but it is growing faster than affordable housing availability, meaning that need is far outweighing availability, and this position has been sustained for many years now.

Private renting has been the fastest growing tenure in North Northamptonshire. Between 2011 and 2021 the share of households living in the private rented sector (PRS) in North Northamptonshire rose from 14.1% to 18.4%.

The increase in the percentage of privately rented homes was greater in North Northamptonshire (4.3 percentage points) than across the East Midlands (3.8 percentage points, from 14.9% to 18.7%). Across England, the percentage increased by 3.6 percentage points, from 16.8% to 20.5%.

Private renting in North Northamptonshire increased by 4.3 percentage points.

Percentage of households by housing tenure in North Northamptonshire between 2011 and 2021.

Classification	Percentage in North Northamptonshire
Owens outright or with a mortgage or loan	68.1% 65.0%
Shared ownership	0.7% 1.2%
Social rented	15.7% 15.2%
Private rented	14.1% 18.4%
Lives rent free	1.3% 0.1%

Source: Office for National Statistics - 2011 Census and Census 2021

Levelling up

In considering high levels of deprivation, socio-economic challenges and lack of infrastructure, community and civic assets, and the investment required to mitigate these challenges, three neighbourhoods in North Northamptonshire have been designated as 'left behind.'

'Left behind' is used to identify and describe a very particular set of wards, not to imply that the areas so described lack people with skills and commitment or a rich heritage. It is a term that was adopted as shorthand for those disadvantaged areas with high levels of community need that we advocate on behalf of. Key barriers to development in these neighbourhoods are a lack of services, facilities, and connectivity that other areas often take for granted.

The three areas her in North Northamptonshire are:



Kingswood/Hazel Leys ward in Corby



Avondale Grange ward in Kettering



Queensway ward in Wellingborough

In February 2022, the Government highlighted 'left behind' communities by publishing a white paper on Levelling up.

They stated that 'The United Kingdom is an unparalleled success story – a multi-cultural, multi-national, multi-ethnic state with the world's best broadcaster; a vibrantly creative arts sector; a National Health Service which guarantees care for every citizen; charities and voluntary groups which perform a million acts of kindness daily; globally renowned scientists extending the boundaries of knowledge every year; entrepreneurs developing the products and services which bring joy and jobs to so many; and millions of citizens whose kindness and compassion has been so powerfully displayed during the COVID-19 pandemic.'

However, they acknowledged that not everyone has shared equally in these success and there is a parallel with this view in North Northamptonshire, particularly for the three areas designated as 'left behind.'

Challenge, what is happening and approach?



'Levelling up' is a mission to challenge, and change, the disparity between these areas and their flourishing neighbours. Levelling up means to give everyone the opportunity to flourish. It means people everywhere living longer and more fulfilling lives and benefitting from sustained rises in living standards and well-being.



Whilst there is still much to do, a lot of work and improvement has already been achieved. Housing regeneration has improved standards, and residents' groups in this area have been working with Local Trust, Trusting Local People | Transforming & Improving Lives | Local Trust to develop their communities individual characteristics and strengths.



This strategy is part of a suite of strategies and plans that are designed to address these challenges in a comprehensive approach with the vision of making North Northamptonshire, without exception, a proud, prosperous, and proactive place to live.

Growth and the Housing Market

Our aspiration for inclusive growth needs to be matched with homes residents can afford. Our analysis of the housing market shows house prices in North Northamptonshire have remained substantially below national averages.



Across the East Midlands, the average house price in August 2024 was £250,000, which was more than a year earlier (£245,000).



Across Great Britain, a home sold for an average of £296,000 in August 2024, which was up from the August 2023 average of £288,000.



The average house price in North Northamptonshire was £270,000 in August 2024 (provisional), up 2.9% from August 2023. This was higher than the rise in the East Midlands (2.1%) over the same period.



This is considerably higher than our East Midlands average but lower than Great Britain as a collective. However, it is a significant rise from the 2011 census reporting of £181,000 (67%).



Private rents rose to an average of £869 in September 2024, an annual increase of 5.6% from £823 in September 2023. This was lower than the rise in the East Midlands (8.8%) over the year.

But, given our relatively low average household incomes, that still means that many residents find meeting housing costs a challenge.



ONS figures for 2021 suggest that there are 173,000 jobs in North Northamptonshire, which has a working-age (aged 16-65) population of 225,593. The 2021 job density in North Northamptonshire is 0.77, meaning there are 0.77 jobs per member of the North Northamptonshire working-age population.



North Northamptonshire had a median average salary for full-time employees of £30,913 in 2023. North Northamptonshire's unemployment rate is 2.2% as of 2023.

Therefore, a full-time employee on an average salary would have to spend nearly 34% of their salary on the average rental costs. With a 2.2% unemployment rate, a growing retired population and for those below the average income, which will mean that the private sector is less affordable and therefore unattainable to a great portion of residents in the area.

At least 49% of households in the social and affordable rented sector in North Northamptonshire are in receipt of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit. It is likely also that some low-income households will be owner occupiers who own their homes outright which may raise questions about their financial ability to maintain their property.

It is important to note that average figures for North Northamptonshire mask patterns within area. For both buying and renting, the averages for rural, urban extensions and new build properties in general are significantly higher than North Northamptonshire as a whole. The variations between neighbourhoods within each town can be substantial also.

It is not possible to say with certainty how many homes in the PRS in North Northamptonshire are not meeting Government's Decent Homes Standard. The English Housing Survey suggests that nationally 27% of PRS homes do not meet this, 20% of homes have 'serious disrepair' and 15% of homes have at least one hazard that is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety. Given the age profile of North Northamptonshire's housing stock and the substantial proportion of the PRS stock, which is in older, terraced properties, it is reasonable to assume that conditions in some parts of the area may be similar to worse state.

Finding the right home is an essential part of life for all of us and the diverse needs of various parts of the population should be reflected in the housing choices available. We know that in future years North Northamptonshire will be home to a much larger, more diverse, group of older people. The scale and pace of the projected demographic changes, whilst not unique, do bring its own challenges for the area, particular in term of housing need.



The average life expectancy in North Northamptonshire is 79.2 for men and 82.4 for women. However, if they live in the 20% of the most deprived areas, this reduces by 9 years for men and 7 for women.



The average life expectancy nationally is 78.8 years for men and 82.8 for women, which is roughly on a par.

However, with the growing older population and a sizeable portion of the population with long-term health problems or disabilities, housing will play a key part in managing health needs and maintaining and improving the quality of life for our residents.

That is not to say there will not be challenges. The appropriate housing is a key factor for delivery and delivering specialist housing to meet need is higher than the average cost of house building.

The Council currently provides support to 328 (280 LD, 48 Autistic) working age adults who live in a supported living environment with their own tenancy. Supported Living services are provided via North Northamptonshire's Framework of Providers. There are currently 63 providers operating across 198 locations. 44% of people live in Kettering, 35% Wellingborough, 12% Corby and 9% East Northants.










The supply of accommodation and specialist supported living services is through registered social landlords (RSL), Housing Associations (HA), Local Council housing stock and private landlord arrangements. Current accommodation offers both single and shared living arrangements within purpose-built accommodation, converted or extended buildings or local housing market stock. With the growing population projections, work will be needed to identify future needs and demands

Improving the management of council owned stock

As the largest landlord in North Northamptonshire, the council is committed to ensuring it provides high quality management, advice and support to all council tenants and leaseholders.

Our key objectives are:

- That we provide easy, consistent and structured pathways to enable tenants to engage with the council and influence the services that they receive.
- Ensuring that our properties are safe, well maintained, and secure.
- That we treat all tenants fairly and with respect .
- That we put in place structures that can support and empower our most vulnerable residents.
- That we allocate and let properties in a fair and transparent way, that meets the needs of tenants,
- Manage our properties and estates to ensure we maintain tenants' rights and enforce against tenants who breach their tenancies and impact on others.
- That we listen to and communicate with residents, to support them to understand their rights and responsibilities and our obligations as a landlord.
- To ensure we collect all rents and service charges to ensure we can deliver high quality services to all tenants and leaseholders.
- That we tackle nuisance and antisocial behaviour to ensure safe communities
- Improve the way we use data and technology to better deliver our services.
- To ensure the service delivers best value for all.
- To ensure we can achieve and deliver against these objectives, the council has set itself the following priorities.

	Estate Management	Develop a clear estate management strategy	S	To improve the standards on our housing estates and communal areas - Including having a clear programme of estate inspections and estate walkabouts
	Tenancy Management	Develop a new tenancy management Policy	S	To enable residents to understand their tenancy rights and obligations and be clearer on the role of their landlord and the level of service they will receive
	Policies and procedures	Review all policies and procedures	S	To ensure all policies are up to date and consider changes in legislation
	Improve Communication to tenants	Develop a Tenancy Engagement Strategy	S	To ensure tenants are consulted, engaged and able to influence the services they receive, including developing a programme of housing surgeries in local centres
		Review all tenancy handbooks	S	To enable residents to have clear information on all housing services and provision
		Improve information about housing services on the council housing website	S	To enable tenants to have better information on housing services and better direct their enquiries
	Housing Restructure	Complete the harmonisation and restructure of the housing service	S	To ensure best practice in housing provision and that the service delivers a high-quality customer focused services that is proactive and can address tenants needs
	Void Standard	Review the lettings standards on void properties	S	To ensure tenants are happy , safe, and settled in their new home
	Repairs Service	Review the provision and funding of the repairs service	S	To ensure it can deliver a robust and proactive repairs service
	Tenancy Sustainment	develop an intensive housing management team	S	to provide support to our most vulnerable tenants, to aid them to live well and sustain their tenancies
	Regulator for Social Housing	Ensure the housing services complies with the requirements of the regulator against the consumer standards	S/M/L	To deliver first in class housing services and improve levels of tenant satisfaction

Priority 1

Build new homes across all tenures where people are proud to live

Planning

North Northamptonshire Council's main evidence base is the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA), the preparation of which involved input from housing colleagues. This feeds into the Local Plan which takes consideration of the Joint Core Strategy and supporting area-based plans. Having a strong evidenced based local plan to set out the strategic context for the delivery of new housing is a key part of making North Northamptonshire an inclusive area, setting out the importance of achieving a mix of values and tenures, of the delivery of affordable homes, the right balance of different types and sizes of homes, the importance of quality design of new homes and their context in the surrounding neighbourhoods, and the supply of land to achieve those objectives.

Currently there is no delivery target for affordable housing, but this will be addressed in the setting out of the definition of affordability and policy work noted in section 4.6 'Affordability.' However, ambitious targets remain in the Joint Core Strategy where we are looking to achieve over 2000 new homes annually up till 2031. We will seek to connect all supply of new housing to wider strategies and policies including around the quality of place, town centres and other committed priorities for infrastructure provision, including schools, health facilities and other social infrastructure as well as power, water and transport, access to open space, economic growth, flood risk and sustainability. This will provide North Northamptonshire with an area wide approach to the delivery of the new homes we need, integrated into an agreed strategic framework, and once adopted, will give developers, landowners, and investors a clearly articulated and consistent policy context to work within.

Delivering the homes we need

The challenge of turning that vision into reality is undoubtedly a significant one, but North Northamptonshire has strengths, experience and opportunities which provide confidence that our ambitions are realistic and deliverable. In purely numerical terms, housing delivery has continued to recover from the post-2008 trough with a continuing upward trend from 2009 onwards.

While traditional market delivery of new homes for sale naturally forms an important baseline supply, there is a growing diversity of supply, and several interventions in place or forthcoming to enhance and support the delivery of a variety of new homes in the area.

We have already outlined the case for increasing the supply of social housing. Social housing reduces costs for temporary accommodation, allows local authorities flexibility when dealing with vulnerable individuals and provides a hugely beneficial impact on the rest of the housing market. Numerous obstacles exist for local authorities and housing associations in the delivery of new social housing: notably Right to Buy, and its potential roll-out to housing association properties, compromises the asset security necessary to justify investment in new properties. As a Unitary Authority, North Northamptonshire Council is committed to finding ways through a problematic legislative and financial environment to maximise the delivery of social housing. We will work with housing providers, housing developers, Homes England, and the Government to maximise investment in new social housing, including through implementing our own Development Programme and supporting Development Strategy and Design Brief to help achieve targets set and consistency in quality design.

Our relationship with Government will naturally be crucial in our ability to deliver the homes we need. We have a strong record of delivery and joint working with Homes England who, then as the Homes and Communities Agency, have been formally linked to our delivered projects since 2008.

Infrastructure enables prosperity, social inclusion and ensures that North Northamptonshire is resilient to potential shocks and stresses. We have seen major changes locally and nationally over the past decades, and in particular we have dealt with converging to a unitary Authority at a time when the world went into a global pandemic. Change is expected to continue, if not accelerate further in the future.

To succeed we need effective infrastructure that is planned for and integrated with strategies for housing, economic development, and the environment.

We have already begun to bring extra delivery capacity and expertise together at the North Northamptonshire level to assist in the enabling work needed to make housing projects happen, working alongside Homes England, developers, housing providers and landowners, and to bring forward schemes using our own assets. Through our enabling function, we will continue to explore options to aid the delivery of the homes we need, including through a closer and stronger relationship with Homes England as the key arm of Government charged with ‘making homes happen.’, and the potential for a North Northamptonshire direct delivery vehicle and continuing and expanding our regeneration, new build projects and the work we do to identify opportunities to deliver housing on public land. There is also potential for joint working to improve the effectiveness of work on issues such as compulsory purchase processes, or viability assessment and associated negotiations. Any new opportunities and options will filter into our Delivery Plan.

Town centres and brownfield sites

New homes can play a vital role in the revitalisation of our town and district centres. A mix of new homes can help to maintain and increase activity in town centres as the challenges offered by the restructuring of the retail market continue to impact. A town centre’s role as the heart of the community is not based solely on shopping but includes being the place where public services can be accessed – libraries, advice and support services, health, and leisure facilities – and where social and cultural life, coffee shops, restaurants, and pubs are found, and people meet.

Town centre living is a common theme – and while there is rightly a focus on how more residents can increase activity and footfall for local businesses, we need to think about how we make town centres attractive places to live. In part, it is those facilities and the public transport connectivity that centres generally offer that form the basis for that appeal.

Beyond that, by improving the quality of urban design, reducing air pollution and congestion, opening up access to green spaces and rivers and canals, planting trees, restoring, and enhancing the historic buildings that give towns their unique identity, town and district centres can become places where people of all ages will choose to live.

Beyond town centres, North Northamptonshire has a land supply dominated by previously developed land – ‘brownfield sites.’

Because brownfield sites are within the grain of existing communities, they are often ideal locations for new homes to meet the needs and aspirations of those communities. We need to find the right tools and funding models to make that happen including support for smaller, local developers who are often well placed to identify and deliver these opportunities. Some sites will pose significant challenges to make them financially viable and will need public sector intervention and investment, but it can be done. Our [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment](#) prepared as part of the Local Development framework tells us this is deliverable and sets out a range of ways in which the Local Planning Authority can meet its housing supply requirements over the 20-year study period of this assessment, 2008-2028. This provides North Northamptonshire with the flexibility to allocate sites in accordance with a range of policy considerations, including conformity with the Core Spatial Strategy, plus other key considerations such as infrastructure capacity.



What are we building?

As already discussed, through local plan work we are setting plans for a sustainable and resilient North Northamptonshire, with the commitment that all new homes and buildings built within area will be net zero carbon by 2040 with the aim of delivering a carbon neutral region no later than 2050, with a dramatic reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions and net gain for biodiversity. Local Plans will also establish the strategic picture in terms of the mix of homes to be delivered. We know from the discussions that have informed the development of this strategy that around North Northamptonshire, the homes that are needed to fill the gaps in the current supply vary considerably. In some areas where affordability is the biggest challenge, the key shortfall is in social housing; in others there is a need to add homes to meet the needs of disabled households, large families, and housing to meet care needs. Amongst these issues and others there is a need to provide accommodation for single residents, including those who have left institutions like the armed forces or who need to access work through living in areas that are easily commutable. The delivery of new affordable housing is one of the tools we must use to try to weaken the relationship between tenure, place, and poverty.

As highlighted in the box on affordability, there are several distinct groups of households under pressure to meet the cost of their homes. Through our supply of new homes we should be providing better choices to ease those pressures – whether that is adding to the stock of social rented housing to reverse the losses from Right to Buy, bringing forward new models that help households to access home ownership in a way they can afford and sustain, or providing homes of all tenures better matched to the need of older households who are currently living in homes which present a risk to their wellbeing and continued independence. There is a need to develop more supported housing to provide more effective routes away from homelessness, but also for a range of others whose needs are currently being inadequately met in mainstream housing, or in expensive and inflexible institutional settings. And many places in North Northamptonshire need a better mix of properties for owner occupation to meet modern expectations and give choice to households to encourage them to stay in their neighbourhood as their family grows.

A modern construction sector

The UK construction industry and its labour model, particularly for housing development, is at a critical crossroads, as the [Farmer Review](#) outlined. The construction sector in North Northamptonshire currently employs around 6% of the population with the majority of that being in housing projects. . Despite increasing numbers, the construction industry has significant levels of hard to fill vacancies and skill shortages. There is also a shortfall of training at higher levels, with most of the in-house training at Level 2, and not enough apprentices climbing up through the skill levels, at a time when Level 4+ jobs are increasingly regarded as essential for construction sector innovation. The construction workforce in North Northamptonshire is also ageing in line with the population.

Demand is currently exceeding employment estimates for many of the key construction occupations, suggesting a need for significant extra training, and reliance on migration from neighbouring areas and regions. Shortfalls are particularly high in professions including architecture, surveying, and bricklaying, as well as for glaziers where the demand is thought to exceed local supply.

We need to work with the sector and education and skills providers to close these gaps, and with housing providers and other key partners to use the power of their supply chain to encourage a stronger commitment to skills development and retention within the industry in North Northamptonshire, as well as issues of place-making, culture, build quality and architectural design. There is the potential to achieve more through closer collaboration between employers and educators, especially given the likely sustained longer-term demand for these skills (both for new build and for maintenance and retrofit of existing properties). The social housing sector has a long history of delivering support to their residents beyond housing and plays a significant role in providing employment related assistance outside of the mainstream welfare system and will be an important partner in this work.

Off-site and precision manufacturing for construction could help the sector to meet housing demand. Precision manufacturing technologies can help to minimise wastage, inefficiencies and delays that affect on-site construction, whilst also raising the energy efficiency performance of buildings. This can make a significant contribution to our ambitions for all new dwellings and buildings to be net zero carbon by 2040 with the aim of delivering a carbon neutral area no later than 2050.



North Northamptonshire Council's sustainability plans and policies for housing revolve around several key goals, the following relate specifically to the modern construction sector:



Housing Decarbonisation Strategies: The council is committed to reducing carbon emissions from residential buildings, both through new housing developments and retrofitting existing homes. This involves promoting the use of low-carbon heating solutions, better insulation, and renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, where possible.



New Build Standards: North Northamptonshire Council aims to ensure that new developments are built to high sustainability standards. This includes adhering to or surpassing national building standards for energy efficiency, water conservation, and the reduction of construction-related emissions. Policies may require developments to include sustainable design features like green roofs, rainwater harvesting, and high levels of insulation.



Sustainable Housing Policies and Local Plan Integration: The Local Plan for North Northamptonshire incorporates several sustainability policies to ensure housing developments are not only low carbon but also resilient to climate change. These policies often require developers to meet specific sustainability standards, incorporating climate-resilient design to protect against flooding, heatwaves, and other climate-related challenges.



Green Skills Development: As part of supporting a green economy, there is an emphasis on developing skills related to sustainable housing construction and retrofitting, ensuring the local workforce can support both current and future sustainability goals in housing.

Each of these initiatives aligns with North Northamptonshire Council's commitment to climate resilience and its goal of reducing local carbon emissions in line with broader national and regional targets. Further details, such as HECA reports, or the exact specifications of local sustainable building standards can also be researched.

North Northamptonshire Council identifies the development of modular construction as key to delivering these clean growth ambitions and aspires to be an influencer and practitioner of modern building practices and techniques. We have put this into practice with difficult to reconstruct vacant garage sites and aim to use the lessons learned to continue to this work and influence through advice based upon the genuine experience of this kind of development.

Modular build and other modern methods of construction may be in their infancy in the UK residential context, but we aim to be doing everything we can to pave the way for their use in the future, including learning from international examples where these techniques are an established part of the supply chain. This transformation can also help to change the perceptions of the sector as a potential career, and aid efforts to diversify the construction workforce.

Industries around modular build components should be encouraged to locate in North Northamptonshire to capture economic benefit from our housing growth plans, and apprenticeships and training in modular build techniques should be encouraged to train our workforce in these innovative practices.

Capturing value for the community

When areas of North Northamptonshire are developed and transformed, we should commit to ensuring that the value we create is retained within communities and local authorities. New development should sit comfortably with the existing community if trust and faith in the planning process is to be retained. Communities should feel the benefits of development. We should maximise the social gains from new development, encouraging enhancement of public realm, public access, and cultural and commercial use where possible.

For **communities**, the retention of value can mean several things not linked to financial gain, we call this social value, and the following are just some examples of what could be achieved:

- The restoration or protection of local heritage and local identity in a place.
- The provision of cultural space, venues, or public realm.
- Innovative and artistic architectural design.
- A legacy for local employment: apprenticeships, local employees, and commitment to training.
- Maximising the local offer to residents by building affordable accommodation, in all tenures, to meet desire and free up the allocation of social housing for those in the greatest need. For example, building bungalows for older people can free up larger homes for families.

Meaningful community consultation on developments should be the norm across North Northamptonshire, as it helps to achieve the right balance between the pressures of household growth and our need for new housing with the protection and enhancement of the character, assets, and environment of our communities. Best practice shows proper community engagement can have a transformative effect, particularly in relation to the design of public realm. This is a model North Northamptonshire Council endorses and aspires towards, allowing every resident to feel they have a stake in the economic, social, and cultural success of their community and the wider North Northamptonshire area.

For **local authorities**, value captures a range of approaches to retaining generated wealth or influencing the shape of development to reinvest in future service delivery or deliver other positive outcomes. This philosophy can be applied in several ways.

Through the planning system, planning obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy, and the Section 106 process, they offer the opportunity to secure contributions to the delivery of infrastructure, environmental and other enhancements, and provision of affordable housing. The National Planning Policy Framework currently prioritises viability for developers (including a notional rate of expected profit), meaning local authorities must engage in extensive negotiations with developers to secure substantial contributions. The Community Infrastructure Levy route, intended to short-cut that negotiation process, has not proved appropriate in our local context.

As part of the direction through this strategy, North Northamptonshire Council will engage in joint work to assess and develop best practice and a consistent approach to the negotiation process, to enhance the contributions to local communities from future development, but potentially also offering greater certainty and pace to developers.

Where possible, there should be a commitment to examine the potential for retaining ownership of land and investing in projects which bring a sustainable return, or which generate a saving for other services such as the NHS or social care.

We will work with housing partners and other public sector bodies including the NHS in North Northamptonshire to explore multiple options when developing sites in their control, based on assessments of their preferred land use and invest-to-save options rather than simply revenue from sale. This is most effective when considered across organisational boundaries, so that potential value for other partners is understood and factored into decision-making. Housing is only one of the potential outcomes of this approach, but one of the more promising areas of collaboration lies in the development of supported housing or extra care schemes to help ease the pressure on NHS and the social care system by promoting and extending independent living.



Case Study



Cheltenham Road - New Development

Homes for Heroes

North Northants Council (NNC) has shown its commitment to people from our armed forces community by signing up to and committing to the Northamptonshire Armed Forces Covenant which proudly supports those who serve and their families and those who have served. You can find more information using this link: [Armed Forces Covenant Northamptonshire | Proudly supporting those who serve and their families.](#)

However, it is not just about aligning our plans, strategies, and policies to meet the needs of the covenant, NNC has gone that step further and has developed the first new homes project that prioritises the housing of this community.

It is a newly built housing development of 18 purpose-built, that have been built and designed to help support the housing needs of our Armed Forces community.

Whilst considering the needs of its new tenants, this development is the first of its kind in the area and has been designed to seamlessly integrate with the existing community. The development consists of eight 2-bed houses, two 3-bed houses, four 1-bed flats, two 2-bed bungalows and two 1-bed bungalows. The bungalows have been designed to meet the needs of older people and those with a specific ground floor need.

A Local Letting plan outlines how the properties are allocated to those households that specifically meet the Armed Forces Criteria. Only after 2 bidding cycles, if the council has received insufficient bids from Armed Forces personnel, then allocations will be made in accordance with the Council's overarching Keyways Allocation Scheme. This is to avoid rent loss and detrimental impact to the area due to properties being left vacant long term.

All the properties form part of North Northamptonshire Council's Housing Stock and are charged at Affordable Rent.

The site is subject to a Natural England Licence to protect the Greater Crested Newts and other amphibians and reptiles in the area. To promote ecology this includes areas of tussock grass and restrictions are in place on cutting heights and seasons, all of which help to promote the local ecology.

The properties have been successfully let and our new tenants are enjoying their new homes and community.



Priority 1 - New Housing Delivery

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
1.1 Delivering Affordable Homes - In its separate roles as a Housing Developer and Strategic Enabler, the council will work with housing partners to deliver the c2,550 new affordable homes annually up to 2031 noted in the JCS (this may be subject to change during any review process that will occur. Including a percentage of new homes split between rent, shared ownership and affordable ownership, to meet the needs, aspirations and demands of residents and prospective new residents.	S/M/L	To increase the number of available homes to meet the growing demand and needs of the area, which is viewed as one of the largest growing populations outside of the London area.
1.2 Review the S106 and local plans in the planning process.	M	Work alongside Planners to ensure, subject to determined viability considerations, that a higher number of properties will be delivered that are affordable via developers and housing associations in the area.
1.3 Make better use of available government funding initiatives such as bidding for Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and other funding opportunities to scale up the supply of housing	M	<p>“Work with NNC Housing, NNC Private Sector Housing and Housing Partners to bid on projects for funding that can support the expansion of existing local authority delivery programmes and/or support where able to, those of local housing association partners. Seek to increase the number of affordable housing units in housebuilder-led schemes. Work to bring empty / dilapidated properties (both residential and commercial units) back into use as housing. Investigate the remodelling defunct specialist accommodation including sheltered accommodation. Work with housing associations to encourage them to maximise the ability to enable owners to own more of the equity in their property ownership completions into housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing modular housing as part of wider efforts to use MMC to support local temporary accommodation pressures. • Commissioning new supply that can be delivered in 2024-25 or 2025-26 from developers. • Purchasing existing properties on the open market.”
1.4 cEnsure the planning process considers the entire infrastructure impacts, considerations and constraints when agreeing new developments.	M	Work with Planning to ensure our whole infrastructure can accommodate the impact of more people working and living in our communities over time. With the council exploring funding opportunities with the government agencies responsible for wider infrastructure, greenspace and healthcare delivery such as Highways England, NHS England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency.
1.5 Through the planning framework, Local Plans, Town Centre Partnerships, and other town centre regeneration initiatives, and continued joint work with government agencies and partners - help ensure supply of sufficient appropriate sites for the regeneration and delivery of new homes with a mix of tenure and need.	M	Aimed to offer a wider choice to residents of property type, location and cost, whilst meeting Housing Delivery and Affordable Homes targets. Providing an opportunity to deliver more homes that are a priority to first time buyers, leaving care users, Older residents not needing sheltered or supported housing but seeking to move, Residents who need to move to downsize, Residents who need disabled adapted properties, To support the needs of Keyworkers and the those eligible under Armed Forces Covenant to secure more permanent and stable accommodation. The later will also work to maintain and improve the wider infrastructure, by ensuring staff for key services such as emergency services personnel, hospital, education services can afford to live and work in North Northamptonshire.

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
1.6 Make the case for increasing the supply of social housing. As a Unitary Authority, North Northants Council is committed to finding ways through a complex and sometimes restrictive legislative and financial environment to maximise the delivery of social and affordable housing. We will work with housing providers, private landlords, voluntary sector, developers, Homes England, and other government agencies to maximise investment in new social and affordable housing to meet need.	M/L	Through collaborative and innovative working ensure the council works as both a housing enabler and provider to deliver more social and affordable housing, either through joint development, purchasing or leasing arrangements. Including identifying other build options such as modular build, self-build, shared ownership . Including releasing or the conversion of council buildings, or building on council land to increase supply
1.7 Continue to campaign for flexibility within the Right to Buy policy to remove funding restrictions and open up new housing delivery options for NNC.	S/M	Take part in the government consultation on the Right to Buy and level of Right to Buy Discount, following the recent decrease in discount and use of Right to Buy receipts. From the government budget announcement of October 2024. Work to ensure all available Right to Buy receipts are used to increase social housing supply, including joint and match funding initiatives with other registered providers and developers. Enforce the councils right of 'first option' to re-purchase previous homes sold under the Right to Buy, if the properties are suitable and offer value for money.
1.8 Set up a Strategic Development Forum to work strategically in the delivery of new affordable housing, including representation from government agencies.	S	Housing Strategy Services will lead on the creation of a Strategic Development Forum to bring together, local councils, developers, private developers, local and regional house builders and developing registered providers who can set the agenda and pace to meet Housing Delivery Targets and Affordable Homes Targets. It will also seek to develop work experience /apprenticeship opportunities to enhance skills and employment across the sector and geographical area.
1.9 Work with partners to develop additional sources of new and accelerated housing development and investment to complement 'business as usual' market delivery and affordable homes programmes, including the joint venture with Housing Providers and Partners, better use of public sector assets, bidding for investment and supporting the contribution of smaller house builders.	M	Work as a collective to bid for enhanced funding to support the increased supply of social housing, private sector housing. For the construction industry in North Northamptonshire to be a centre of excellence and innovation, and an attractive employer for a new generation of skilled workers

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
1.10 Increase the supply of adapted properties to meet the changing needs of households through the planning and development process.	M - L	Work with Planning and partners to ensure a higher number of properties are delivered that are adapted or suitable for adaptation. Including delivering more ground floor or bungalow type properties. Providing residents who are vulnerable with more choice, reducing the need to have to move home if their needs change disability, further reducing the number of residents who are in unsuitable accommodation. Reducing pressure and demand on hospital services, due to inability to discharge. Reduction in costs and pressures on community and adult social care services as residents can be supported in their own homes.
1.11 Encourage and support the shift to modern methods of construction, increased innovation, and the expansion and reskilling of the construction sector and supply chain to raise productivity and the quality and pace of delivery of new homes, and to assist in achieving our target that all new buildings in North Northamptonshire will be net zero carbon by 2050.	L	Work with Planning and Housing Partners to fast track high quality housing at pace, by a reduction in the timescales to deliver on site, without a reduction in build quality. Utilising other areas that are not traditionally considered as build locations e.g. garage sites, brownfield sites, regeneration areas, other disused land that may lend itself to less traditional build type, further enabling the council to build at pace to meet demand from the Housing Register, homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.
1.12 Find routes to invest or increase the provision of additional affordable housing, including social rented housing, to reduce the local authorities reliance on expensive, sometimes inadequate temporary accommodation, and to provide stable, high quality homes for North Northamptonshire residents unable to afford appropriate housing through the market, meeting the commitment to deliver at least 2,556 additional affordable homes annually by 2031 of a mixture that meets the targets set in the pending Affordable Homes document mentioned above.	M / L	Work with NNCs Private Sector Housing Team and partners to consider lease arrangements from other providers, including from private owners to provide longer term more stable letting arrangements, than the current private sector may be able to offer. Consider the setting up of a council letting company that can offer better support for those who do not wish to own a property, or cannot take on the responsibility of fully managing a tenancy, or new flexible accommodation that allows them to move areas for work, etc. Investigate the joint opportunities available to support housing providers in the voluntary sector to access funding not available to the council to increase local supply with local plans to enable the council to have nomination rights to any additional units.
1.13 Commit to building all future council-owned or managed housing to a high energy efficiency or operationally net zero standard.	M	To ensure compliance with all modern housing, safety and building standards Pioneering net zero carbon standards for new homes on future development, and supporting schemes within the Council's own Local Authority New Build programme are to be built to Passivhaus principles.
1.14 Production of a supplementary Planning Document: Consult and agree on a North Northamptonshire approach to defining housing affordability, to drive better targeting of investment and interventions toward the groups of North Northants Council households most challenged in accessing homes they need and can afford.	S/M	Meeting Need and demand: In partnership with Planning and Housing Partners to develop a North Northants Affordable Housing document to define Affordable Housing delivery including, level of need and 'local affordability' required as well as promote specialist schemes, such as Adapted Homes, Supported/ independent accommodation, Older Persons Accommodation, Keyworker and Armed Forces Covenant Commitments.Meet affordable homes target and specialist commitments.

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
1.15 Agree a high quality design brief to all new developments	M	"The council will be championing good design and encouraging new development to have a local identity as we understand that this is key to gaining community support for new developments"
1.16 Through the local employment plans, make the case for a partnership with Government to achieve better alignment of education, training, and employment activity in North Northamptonshire, including for the construction sector.	M / L	Work with NNC Communities and Leisure and other partners to support enhancing the skills of residents in North Northamptonshire and promote self-build initiatives as a model to deliver more housing within this context.
1.17 Develop a more strategic approach to market provision or public sector commissioning of housing suitable for specific groups, including older households looking for better options in their own communities or families with children in the private rented sector, by working to promote investment in housing from pooled budgets between local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups and Government Organisations.	M / L	Work with Housing Providers, Government Agencies, Adult Social Care and Commissioning services on the development and delivery of new housing and communities with the right physical, social, and green infrastructure that promotes healthy lifestyles and more specialist housing. Including more supported and enhanced accommodation for those who require it. Working with public health, health and community services, adult social care, children's services to commission and deliver more specialised and supported housing.
1.18 NNC to produce a Development Strategy for the delivery of new council owned housing.	S/M	Guidance for the delivery of new housing and regeneration to ensure the council uses latest methods of technology, and energy and assisted technology to build forever homes.
1.19 NNC to produce a Build Standard Specification to achieve within its own development plan and to act as an inspiration for standards in the private market.	S/M	Be the lead inspiration for adopting best practice and high standards.
1.20 Promote community-led housing initiatives for North Northamptonshire, to provide support for the development of co-operative and other community-based housing projects to deliver new homes for residents.	L	Work with housing partners in supporting residents to have access to housing that supports their local aspirations, gated communities, offering support to communities who may require different types of accommodation e.g. to support extended families, foster carers etc.
1.21 Undertake a strategic review of extra care , sheltered and supported housing provision across North Northamptonshire	M	Assist Adult Social Care on their strategic review for older persons to see if housing can support the delivery of more suitable accommodation.

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
1.22 Recognising the challenge many North Northamptonshire households face in accessing the homes they aspire to in the current market, develop alternative models and pathways which will assist key groups to achieve secure, high quality homes.	L	Work with NNCs Housing Allocations Team to review the councils allocations bandings for recognised groups with higher protected characteristics such as care leavers, in addition to promoting other options of tenure for those not in a priority housing need.
1.23 Fostering a sense of place - Encourage developers and development agencies to engage with local people early in the process to ensure concerns and issues are picked up and dealt with	M	Work with Planning and Housing Partners to reduce the level of challenge to new schemes, promoting stronger relationships between residents, developers and the council to enhance cooperation, community cohesion and sustained communities and confidence in the planning process.
1.24 In partnership with town and parish councils we will identify rural exception sites to meet rural need, where other sites might otherwise not be forthcoming.	L	Work with Planning Supporting rural communities to thrive
1.25 "Agree a high quality design brief to all new developments. The council will be championing good design and encouraging new development to have a local identity"	M / L	"Work with and support Housing Partners to deliver improved standards, as we understand that this is key to gaining community support for new developments."
1.26 Support opportunities to use development to conserve and enhance local landscape, biodiversity and access to greenspace.	L	Work with Housing Delivery partners to maintain and enhance spatial and community aesthetics.
1.27 Ensure the planning process considers the entire infrastructure impacts, considerations and constraints when agreeing new developments	L	Work with planning and housing partners to ensure our whole infrastructure can accommodate the impact of more people working and living in our communities over time. With the council exploring funding opportunities with the government agencies responsible for wider infrastructure, greenspace and healthcare delivery such as Highways England, NHS England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency. "e in poorer housing, unstable housing circumstances or lack accommodation altogether.

Priority 2

Improving the quality of the existing housing stock to provide decent, energy efficient and safe homes

What to do with the homes we have?

The vast majority of the homes we will have by 2050 are already built. Therefore, any conversation on the future of our housing supply must take our existing stock as a starting point. Having an attractive and well-balanced mix of housing is a principal component in meeting our aim of ensuring that every part of North Northamptonshire plays a strong role in delivering inclusive growth to benefit our residents. Our housing offer must better match the needs and aspirations of a diverse population, with the numbers of older households increasing substantially, and with a growing labour market to support.

So, the importance of prioritising and finding new ways to optimise the quality, use and value of our existing homes and neighbourhoods is clear. Across North Northamptonshire, we need to think across tenures at neighbourhood, borough, district, and unitary levels, to consider the entire housing stock as a system, understanding its interconnections.

Safe and decent homes

The disaster at Grenfell Tower in 2017 put a sharp and unblinking spotlight on the safety of high-rise blocks, and the Hackitt Review and ongoing investigations are uncovering a series of lessons which we will need to ensure are learned and applied in North Northamptonshire. Whilst we do not have homes constructed in the high-rise style, we do have multi-level accommodations in the area as well as a variety of home designs and the lessons will be valuable and considered within the maintenance of existing homes and new development. North Northamptonshire Council's Property Services team will continue to lead and coordinate much of this work on the Council's own stock, and through partnership work, will promote these lessons broadly, both for social housing as a sector and cross-tenure around construction materials and techniques, building control and other health and safety processes, which we must ensure are properly addressed.

The Hackitt Review provides a starting point for work to ensure that North Northamptonshire Council leads the way in ensuring the safety of existing and new homes. While Government's announcement of a Future Homes Standard for new homes to be in place by 2025 is welcome in principle, there are significant concerns around the current requirements and enforcement of Building Regulations, and the position of leaseholders living in potentially unsafe blocks, which justify more urgent attention.

The 2018 social housing green paper proposed a review of the Decent Homes Standard, potentially a welcome development in respect of a tenure which is – in general – already maintained to a consistent, decent standard by housing providers. But it does highlight the lack of tools, capacity and – particularly – sources of funding to directly intervene in raising the standards of homes in the private sector housing stock. While it is a natural starting point to expect the owners of those privately held assets to invest in maintaining them to modern standards, it is also clear that not all are able or (in some cases) willing to do that.

The broader, long-term costs to society and the quality of places, and to public services including the NHS, which result from people living in inferior quality, unsafe homes are substantial, and historically were the subject of significant policy interventions by governments of all parties. To improve this we need new thinking, new tools, new partnerships.

A welcome focus in the green paper was rebalancing the relationship between residents and landlords to ensure residents understand their rights and ensuring their voices are heard. This of course is an issue which spans across tenures, and we will continue to work to improve the lives of tenants, whether renting from a social or private landlord, to ensure the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords are protected.

Fuel poverty, carbon reduction and retrofit

On fuel poverty and carbon reduction, we need a clear multi-tenure approach to retrofit and improving the energy performance of our existing homes. The Decent Homes Standard and longstanding investment by housing providers has raised the bar in the social housing sector. We would expect the proposed review of Decent Homes Standard to incorporate stronger commitment to reducing fuel poverty and carbon emissions. But we know our biggest issues remain in the private sector, and particularly the private rented sector. Our strategy will prioritise developing this approach across North Northamptonshire, working with our partners and residents to explore and exploit any levers at our disposal to raise the standards in private homes, and integrating fuel poverty into our wider work with private landlords and owner occupiers.

From a sustainability point of view, North Northamptonshire Council's Environmental Plan for sustainable housing centres on

- promoting energy efficiency,
- reducing carbon emissions, and
- integrating climate resilience into residential development.

Here is a breakdown of the main elements of the plan:



Energy Efficiency in Existing Housing Stock: The Council prioritises upgrading existing homes through retrofitting programs, which include improved insulation, better window glazing, and more efficient heating systems. This effort not only aims to cut emissions but also to alleviate fuel poverty and reduce energy bills for residents. This aligns with the council's reporting and compliance under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA).



Green Standards for New Developments: New housing developments in North Northamptonshire are expected to meet high environmental standards. This includes requiring developers to adopt sustainable building practices, such as installing low-energy lighting, using sustainable building materials, incorporating renewable energy sources like solar panels, and ensuring excellent insulation standards. The Local Plan outlines these requirements and sets goals to achieve net-zero carbon for new builds.



Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Solutions: The Environmental Plan emphasises the use of low-carbon heating solutions, such as air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, and district heating systems, particularly for new homes. In existing housing, the Council is encouraging residents to switch from fossil-fuel-based heating to more sustainable alternatives, backed by various incentives and grant programs.



Climate Resilient Design: Recognising the need for homes to withstand future climate impacts, the plan includes guidelines for climate-resilient design. This involves protecting homes from flood risks through effective water management systems, green roofs, and rainwater harvesting. Other measures include designing homes that can cope with extreme temperatures, by using natural ventilation systems and heat-resistant materials.



Sustainable Land Use and Biodiversity: To enhance biodiversity, the Environmental Plan promotes sustainable land use around housing developments. This includes creating green spaces, planting native trees and shrubs, and developing community gardens. These features not only enhance the local environment but also help to create a more pleasant and healthier living space for residents.



Water Conservation and Management: Sustainable housing under this plan also incorporates water-saving measures, such as rainwater harvesting systems, low-flow fixtures, and greywater recycling. Developers are encouraged to integrate sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) to manage stormwater, reduce flooding risks, and improve water quality.



Community Engagement and Support: The Council recognises that achieving environmental goals requires engaging residents and helping them make sustainable choices. Initiatives include raising awareness on energy-saving practices, supporting community projects that promote sustainability, and providing resources for residents to make their homes more environmentally friendly.



Monitoring and Reporting: To track progress and ensure accountability, the Council collects data on energy efficiency and emissions reductions from housing projects. This monitoring is essential for adapting policies as needed and meeting local, regional, and national targets for carbon reduction.

The Environmental Plan for sustainable housing reflects North Northamptonshire's commitment to addressing climate change locally by focusing on both immediate and long-term environmental impacts in the housing sector. This integrated approach supports the council's goals to achieve a low-carbon, climate-resilient housing stock that benefits both the environment and the community.

We are clear that our challenging targets can only happen through a combination of sustained initiative-taking national policy and aligned priorities and resources. New mechanisms to generate investments in energy efficiency are needed in both new build and existing homes if the health, poverty, and productivity impacts of inefficient stock are to be addressed.

Through this work, we are planning a sustainable and resilient North Northamptonshire, with the commitment that all new homes and buildings built within to be net zero carbon by 2050.

However, the Council's own existing housing stock remains a significant challenge. Identifying cost effective pathways through surveying 2400 properties per year over the next five years, shows the scale of that challenge. These surveys will tell us what we need to do to ensure the decent homes standards are met and exceeded where possible. Through a comprehensive, ambitious and activity driven Housing Asset Management Policy we are seeking to invest in our stock to prioritise long-term sustainability.

The policy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Well-Maintained Housing Stock:** All properties will be maintained to a defined standard, ensuring compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. The Council will adopt a proactive maintenance schedule to reduce reactive repairs.
- **Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction:** To support the UK's climate goals, the Council aims to retrofit homes with energy-efficient systems. This includes upgrading heating systems, improving insulation, and exploring renewable energy options.
- **Safety and Compliance:** Properties will comply with all relevant health and safety legislation, including fire safety, asbestos management, gas safety, and electrical standards. Regular inspections and audits will be conducted to ensure high safety standards and legal compliance.
- **Enhanced Resident Engagement:** The Council aims to place residents at the heart of asset management decisions. Regular consultations, tenant satisfaction surveys, and engagement panels will ensure that resident priorities are addressed in the planning and execution of maintenance and regeneration activities.
- **Financial Viability:** The policy will ensure that all asset management activities are delivered within the financial constraints of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This includes effective use of rental income, prudent planning of capital investments, and maintaining the affordability of rents.

However, the ambitions of this Council can be impacted by external decisions that they have no control over making. Whilst the [Right to Buy scheme](#) now allows councils to keep 100% of their receipts from sales in order to replenish stock through new housing development and market purchases, the discounted sales prices and loss of rental income from existing properties is not balanced by the cost of purchasing new properties and building new homes. Therefore, the Government's drive for the delivery of their 'one for one' reinvigoration programme launched in 2012 is a misnomer that needs to be updated to reflect the current housing market. An eight-week open consultation that is running from 20th of November 2024 to the 15th of January 2025, is seeking views around the proposed Reformation of the Right to Buy Scheme.

The consultation follows the reduction in maximum Right to Buy cash discounts, which was announced at Autumn Budget 2024, and asks for views on:

- the qualifying criteria for tenants
- initial and maximum discounts as a percentage of the property value
- which types of properties should be exempted under the scheme
- whether there should be increased restrictions on properties after sale
- the replacement of homes sold under the Right to Buy
- rules governing the use of Right to Buy receipts and how these could be simplified.

Another potentially impacting plan is the '[Future of Social Housing Rent Policy](#)' which is currently out for consultation also. This consultation seeks views on a new Direction from the Secretary of State to the Regulator of Social Housing in relation to social housing rent policy. It focuses on the introduction of a new rent policy from 1 April 2026. This consultation began on Wednesday 30 October and will close at 11.45pm on Monday 23 December. The Direction would require the Regulator to set a standard on rents that will apply to Registered Providers of social housing. This encompasses:

- Private Registered Providers (including housing associations that are Private Registered Providers)
- Local authority Registered Providers (i.e. local authorities with retained housing stock)

Section 197 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 gives the Secretary of State the power to direct the Regulator of Social Housing to set a standard on rent, and about the content of that standard. Once issued, a Direction is binding on the Regulator.

The current Government proposes to use this power to issue a new Direction to the Regulator on rent, and to revoke directions on rents that were issued by the previous government in 2019 and 2023. The proposed Direction and an accompanying policy statement have been published alongside this consultation. The outcome of this consultation could negatively affect the level of rental income coming into the Council and other registered housing providers, which would impact on the level of the positive initiatives proposed through the Housing Asset Management Policy.

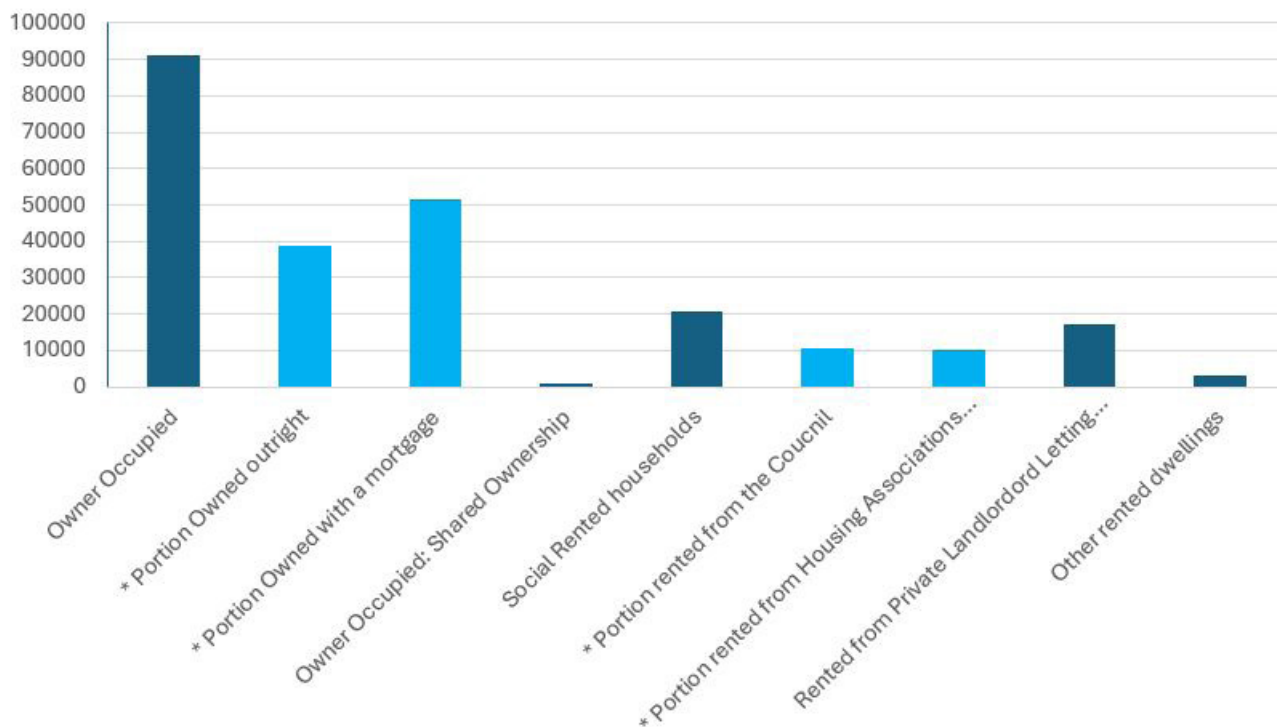
Owner occupation

Owner occupation remains the biggest single sector of North Northamptonshire's housing mix. Homeowners are an ageing demographic as house prices increase and mortgage finance is harder to access amongst younger generations. Generally, homeowners are not considered to be a 'high need' group, but this assumption could conceal issues regarding older owner occupiers that may be in low value, poor condition properties and therefore be part of the hidden cost to health and social care.

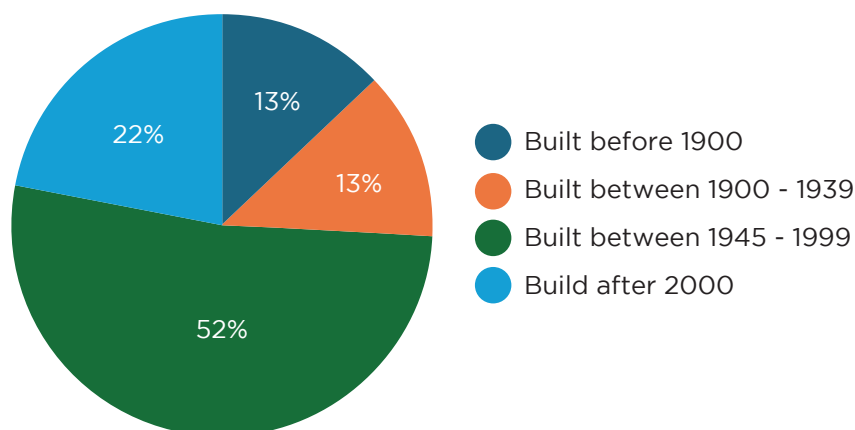
The spread of tenure throughout the North Northamptonshire area is as follows: (source 2011 census)

Housing dwellings by tenure

(with ownership and social rented broken down into Mortgage and Landlord type)



There are a variety of housing construction types and ages of dwellings in the North Northamptonshire area. The following chart shows the percentage spread by age of build: Source 2011 census.



Many of the pre-1939 properties will need substantial investment to bring them up to modern standards, as will those dwellings that were constructed post-world war two. These make up for more than three quarters of the dwellings currently in North Northamptonshire, and with 85 percent of these being in the private sector, the council will work to further understand the needs of this demographic, how best to help them improve their properties and – where possible – give them options to relocate to more suitable properties.

Private Rented Sector

The size of the private rented sector in North Northamptonshire is on a par with the Social Rented Sector and caters for several diverse types of housing need and demand. It also provides mid-market family housing and apartments across a range of price levels. This growth is driven in part by trends in other tenures, including households unable to secure mortgage finance to move into owner occupation, and declining supply of social housing. Many new households find their first home in the private rented sector. Whilst recognising that experiences in the private rented sector are often positive, we must also acknowledge that this sector also contains the worst conditions in our housing market, with issues of instability, poor quality, bad management, and poor maintenance being commonly reported to the Council. Therefore, we need to work together to understand where these issues are coming from and collectively drive-up standards at the bottom end of the private rented sector.

North Northamptonshire Council uses its enforcement and licensing powers up to its legal limits, not least to ensure safety of residents in the sector. And where tenants are in receipt of Local Housing Allowance, the private rented sector is arguably operating in effect as social housing, but without most of the access to additional support and regulatory safeguards and security of tenure a social tenant can expect to enjoy.

It should be noted that resources available to tackle enforcement work are stretched, and the national regulatory framework can seem ‘confused and contradictory.’ Therefore, we need to find ways to address the lack of capacity available to enforce and raise standards in the private sector as it grows, especially considering the extended definition of houses in multiple occupation (HMO) expands the local authorities’ role.

Given the scale of the sector, it is important that we do all we can to encourage greater and more effective self-regulation for the remainder of the market. We will work with engaged professional landlord and lettings agencies to help them deliver high quality market lettings. But we will also adopt more collaborative approaches to actively deal with rogue landlords and agents who are seriously or persistently failing in their responsibilities to tenants.

The [Homes \(Fitness for Human Habitation\) Act 2018](#) empowers residents to act themselves if their landlord is not meeting their obligations. Collaboratively with our partners in Advice and Legal Services, we need to help tenants have the confidence and knowledge to do that, and to make their individual and collective voices heard without the threat of retaliatory eviction.

Social Housing

The social housing sector in North Northamptonshire has been reducing in size for decades – falling from over [8,644 in 2009 to 8,097 in 2024](#) a loss of 547 homes mainly through the Right to Buy. Housing Association Landlords in the area have seen a rise in the numbers of their affordable housing for a similar time range (2009 to 2023), from 12,882 to 16,552 an increase of 3,670.

The reasons for this are varied, but one example is the difference between the Right to Buy for Council homes and the Right to Acquire for Housing Associations. Most council tenants have a secure tenancy. This means the length of their tenancy is not under a time limit. Most people in this position will be able to buy their home under the Right to Buy scheme if they want to and can afford to. Homes may be bought with a discount of up to £82,800 (or £110,500 in London) if you live in a council property. Housing association tenants can often buy their home under the Right to Acquire scheme. The discounts available under this scheme can be £9,000 and £16,000, depending on where you live and if the tenant is eligible. This makes the purchase of a Council home that much more attractive, particularly in the current fiscal climate.

As the Social sector has become less dominant, the role it has played in the overall housing market has become less influential in terms of negotiating affordable housing. Claims of viability are hard to challenge in an unstable fiscal climate. This has a knock on effect for delivering housing that meets the need of the Council's Housing Register and with an aging population and growing need for affordability across all age groups, this is a powerful driver not only for setting Affordable housing policies to support planning targets against a growing populations needs but to have a greater level of communication and understanding between social housing providers, private sector housing delivery and the health and social care system. In a North Northamptonshire context, with devolution around health and social care already a reality, this could form the basis for a more strategic approach to the negotiation and commissioning of new social housing, particularly an appropriate mix of supported housing, with their various client groups in mind. But as social housing has become an increasingly scarce resource, the systems used to allocate those homes that become available, require additional scrutiny to ensure they are fair and effective. A review of the allocation and pro scheme and processes managing the it, will help to build and maintain a scheme that deals fairly with a complex mix of people with varying needs including (for example) members of the Armed Forces community, victims of domestic abuse, care leavers, ex-offenders, older people, people with mental and physical health issues, families and the list goes on which is why this is a huge challenge for local authorities and housing providers alike.

We will explore the benefits of a coordinated North Northamptonshire Housing Strategy Delivery as a way to improve accessibility and increase the housing options for all groups of applicants in housing need.

We will do this through a number of focussed stakeholder fora, including (but not exclusively) the Homeless Forum, Registered Landlords Forum, Development Forum and Tenants and Residents groups. These groups will help us manage and resolve challenges in a focussed and coordinated way to target the issues of affordable decent housing in a range of sizes and types that will support health and social care and reduce the cost to the health care system and homelessness by having the homes we need in a place that can thrive. The increasing consensus around the vital importance of social housing within the broader housing system will continue to drive innovation and good practice, including work to overcome the barriers to delivery of new social housing.

One Housing Market

The above discussion of the homes we already have should be considered starting with the understanding that successful neighbourhoods are almost always a mix of different house types, tenures, values, and styles. Those homes are built in and around the other features of a place that anyone would want to live in – good public transport facilities, good transport connectivity for visiting places, green space, excellent schools and health provision, and a thriving local high street. In housing terms, we need to be careful not to consider and act on each tenure in isolation.

It is clear on the ground that 'social housing estates' are now a mix of social tenants, private renters, and owner occupiers. Private renters are found on almost every street in North Northamptonshire. People move from one tenure to another every day, and individual homes too can change tenures in a paper transaction. It is the complex interaction of those decisions we need to consider as we create, implement, and monitor the impacts of our strategies and interventions as we endeavour to meet the housing need of North Northamptonshire's residents.

Affordability

Affordability is one of the central drivers for Government's recent interventions in the housing market nationally – for example, the financial barriers facing potential first time buyers are behind the creation of affordable options for new homeowners. But there is no single agreed definition of affordability, no single agreed point at which housing is 'unaffordable,' and an ever wider official definition of 'affordable housing.' There are several different elements that need to be considered. Household income is clearly an essential element, and there is a rule of thumb among commentators that housing costs start to become unaffordable once they go beyond 30% of household income. But one common response to housing costs is for households to reshape themselves – adult children staying with or moving back to the parental home, or groups of individuals and couples sharing a sole property and dividing an otherwise unaffordable rent into affordable chunks.

A simpler and more common approach is to compare house prices to incomes or earnings. This can be varied by looking at median or mean figures, or lower or higher quartile if a particular portion of the market is being examined. This is often used to compare and map affordable areas. This only relates to owner occupation, which in North Northamptonshire comprises 66.22% of the market, and variations in interest rates will greatly alter the actual affordability of a particular price-income ratio.

It also ignores the genuine costs of a house purchase – for most potential buyers, the biggest financial hurdle is the need to save a deposit and pay for the legal costs to managing that purchase. The monthly cost of paying a mortgage is often less than first time buyers have previously paid in the private rented sector. That deposit hurdle is increasingly being solved with the help of the 'Bank of Mum and Dad,' for those lucky enough to have suitably wealthy/generous family connections. This illustrates another complicating factor in judging affordability – measuring only household income, without including savings or wealth (especially for those who already have some equity in an existing property) can lead to misleading conclusions and skewed data indicators.

In the rental market, another set of benchmarks exist, with 'Affordable Rent' properties being defined as costing up to a maximum of 80% of market rent in an area. Local Housing Allowance rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for those renting privately, with the Rent Officer setting a benchmark based on the 30th percentile of actual rents being paid in an area.

Another approach is to look at 'residual income' – calculating a benchmark for the income needed by a typical household for the non-housing costs of a minimum standard of living, with the income remaining then considered available to meet housing costs.

As shown here, determining affordability is a complex task and justifies further work and analysis to understand the affordability pressures in North Northamptonshire. We know the cost of housing can be a challenge to different cohorts within the housing system across the area – including those needing access to social/affordable rent or trying to maintain a tenancy as welfare rules are squeezed. In need of consideration is the private renters sharing and saving as prospective first-time buyers looking for routes into home ownership, people in unstable employment in any tenure, older owner occupiers without the resources to maintain a decaying property, or people living in overcrowded properties because they cannot afford or access a home large enough to meet their needs.

We need to embrace the complexity of the issue to help better inform decisions about the new homes needed that our residents could afford. Part of the delivery plan for this strategy will be to set out our definition for affordability and affordable housing in North Northamptonshire, which will help us in our work to deliver homes and a housing market that is truly affordable to all our residents.



Case Study



Decent Homes

North Northamptonshire Council's housing stock includes a large number of houses in Kettering and the smaller towns of Desborough and Rothwell, which are pre-war built, of solid wall construction and are in need of modernisation, both internal and externally.

The 'Homes for the Future' project commenced approximately 10 years ago to target homes that need to be modernised and made fuel efficient. This project remains as valid today as when it started a decade ago and features as part of the Council's capital works programme.

To date, fifty-five homes have gone through the programme to make them more energy efficient, warmer, damp free and modern properties.

These pre-war properties suffered from poor room layouts with the bathrooms on the ground floor next to the kitchens, poor heat loss and inefficient heating systems. Bathrooms and bedrooms suffered from damp and mould because of a build-up of condensation and lack of air circulation.

The project concept is to carry out a complete refurbishment and modernisation of the properties to both internal and external areas as they become available to do so and at the tenant's discretion. Room layouts were redesigned by moving the bathrooms upstairs to create bigger kitchens to include a dining area, and in some cases, a downstairs toilet installed. Bedrooms were altered to create space for the bathrooms whilst still retaining good size bedrooms.

The properties were all completely rewired throughout, new heating systems installed with a more energy efficient boiler, damp proof works carried out where needed, new energy efficient UPVC windows and composite doors installed, new kitchens and bathrooms that included a shower over the bath (fed from the boiler not mains electric), LED lighting in all areas, and loft insulation installed to stop heat escaping through the roof.

On the exterior of the properties, External Wall Insulation (EWI) is wrapped around the whole of the outside walls, all existing timber soffit, fascia boarding and rainwater goods were replaced with white UPVC, and a UPVC canopy installed over the front door to improve the aesthetics of the properties. We also built new brick walls with metal railings to the front boundaries and installed new fencing to the rear gardens, the result of the finished works gave the area a huge uplift in the appearance of the street scene.

Before the works were carried out, an Energy Proficiency Certificate (EPC) showed most properties rated as a 'D', after the completed works, the EPC rating was increased to a minimum 'C' rating, resulting in better energy efficient throughout the property and more cost effective for the tenants. The refurbishment works took approximately 10 - 12 weeks per property.

This is just one of the many projects the Council has, that is set to improve its stock and achieve the Decent Homes Standard for its tenants.



Priority 2 Existing Housing

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
2.1 Improving access to social and affordable housing - Review the processes for allocating social housing to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet housing need, whilst focusing on need and managing the expectation that social housing is the only housing option.	S / M	To have a Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme (KHAS) that better supports and allocates properties to suit and match housing need. Which makes better use of limited social housing availability and can better manage the expectation that council housing is the only accessible housing option.
2.2 Collate better tenant profiling information on existing tenants, to better understand their housing need, to allocate properties in a way that can support them and enhance quality of life and tenancy sustainability	S / M	Work together to achieve a better understanding of our tenants and the match between provision and allocation of social housing and the needs of vulnerable households whose existing housing situation exacerbates their health or other care needs.
2.3 Review the council home moves and downsizing policies	M	To support council tenants to move within current housing stock or via that of partners on KHAS to make better allocation of limited social housing stock, supporting the freeing up of larger properties to reduce overcrowding.
2.4 Work with other partners on the keyways housing waiting list to take up opportunities to use disabled facilities grant that may not be available to the council	M	To support tenants to have additional adaptations, minor or major works to support them to live well within their current home, or provide more adapted properties to enable those in unsuitable accommodation to move.
2.5 Decent Homes Standards, Council Housing - Undertake retro fit survey works to our existing housing stock to ensure that it provides energy efficient homes for our residents (Energy Performance Certificate band C and above).	M	All stock to be Energy Performance Certificate band C by 2030 and working towards Net Zero Carbon by 2050.
2.6 Prioritise completing stock condition surveys for those properties that we do not have an in date survey for in 2025 and then ensure a rolling 5 year stock condition survey inspection programme is in place once this is completed. The data collected from the stock condition surveys will then be used to focus our capital investment programme each year.	S	The data collected from the stock condition surveys will then be used to focus our capital investment programme each year, and deliver further improving and investment to council owned stock.
2.7 Deliver a balanced programme of investment to all of the key components (heating, wiring, Kitchens and bathrooms, windows and doors, roofing, energy efficiency upgrades etc.) of our existing housing stock that is data driven, and in line with the Council's adopted 30 year Housing Revenue Account business plan.	S	All stock maintained to the Decent Homes standard on an ongoing basis.

2.8 Review the HRA capital works programme that will sit alongside the 30 year Housing Revenue Account business plan.	S	That will take a longer a more strategic overview of how the council invests in its stock and will ensure Tenants and leaseholders are better able to understand how the Council invests in its stock to ensure it meets the decent homes standard.
2.9 Develop an asset management and disposal policy	S / M	That will enable the council to more effectively plan the delivery of improvements to its stock, including disposal of those assets that are no longer fit for purpose or financially viable to improve or retain.
2.10 Affordable Housing - Development of an estate strategy, that looks at holistic improvements on housing estates	S / M	Understanding issues and acting to resolve them
2.11 Standards - Prioritise completing stock condition surveys for those properties that we do not have an in date survey for in 2025 and then ensure a rolling 5 year stock condition survey inspection programme is in place once this is completed. The data collected from the stock condition surveys will then be used to focus our capital investment programme each year.	S	For those homes to receive the investment they need to meet and exceed modern requirements for their safety, security, warmth, and physical accessibility. This includes retrofitting our existing homes to help meet our ambitions to be a carbon neutral area by 2050.
2.12 Private Sector Rent Standards - Consider the development of a North Northamptonshire accredited landlord scheme to encourage and support and incentivise landlords providing a safe, decent, and secure homes for their tenants, working with national and regional landlord and letting agencies networks.	M	Working with NNCs Private Sector Housing Team to develop a viable scheme so that tenants and landlords have confidence that homes will be professionally managed, safe, decent, and affordable
2.13 Through NNC Website, resources and support agencies, provide good information and support to tenants in the Private Rented Sector.	L	Support NNCs Private Sector Husing team to assist renters to understand their rights and to empower them to take action to ensure landlords meet their obligations.
2.14 Consistent, coordinated approach to enforcement of standards in the PRS across North Northamptonshire by NNC and key partner agencies, including targeted interventions against rogue landlords, who have properties that are in breach of health and safety or a poor standard	L	Support NNCs Private Sector Housing to drive forward improvements in standards, including building safety and health and safety compliance to ensure renters are safe.
2.15 Private Sector Empty Homes - Encourage property owners in all tenures to invest by designing cost-effective pathways for retrofit of homes to raise energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions across all tenures in support of 2050 target for North Northamptonshire to be carbon by 2050.	L	Residential sector makes full contribution to North Northants Council becoming a carbon neutral city region by 2038.

<p>2.16 Through the Council's Private Sector Housing Policy, bring long term empty homes back into use.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>"To increase the supply of homes for our residents. Used as a valuable resource and option to alleviate homelessness, address housing needs and either remove or reduce the risk of blight to neighbouring properties. Bringing empty homes back into use is crucial to the long-term prosperity of run-down areas."</p>
<p>2.17 Standards in all housing tenures - Identify ways in which we can reduce the energy demands of our homes and all other buildings, to meet our ambitious plans for delivering a net zero carbon neutral region no later than 2050. This will include having supporting infrastructure in place as our region grows.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Ensuring our existing housing stock is suitable, accessible, and fit for the future is integral to improving and maintaining our population's health.</p>
<p>2.18 Gaps - Data on housing in the private sector is sparse and means that the picture of the housing market is incomplete, which is a gap we are looking to close within the life span of this strategy.</p>	<p>M / L</p>	<p>Improved knowledge on the housing market in NN in order to feed into future decisions and planning.</p>

Priority 3

Preventing homelessness to ensure everyone has access to decent, safe and secure homes

We know that the issues facing our diverse population are complex and changing. Single adults and single parents are amongst the highest number of people presenting to this Council as homeless. In this area, people between the ages of 25 to 34, are especially impacted by homelessness. Welfare reform, notably the restriction for single people under 35 reliant on benefits to shared accommodation rates has had a significant impact on this group.

North Northamptonshire has a broad spectrum of homeless approaches by age and whilst the 25 to 34 age range is the highest percentage of approaches, we see approaches from all age groups. Below is an excerpt from the Councils homeless data review by age profile:

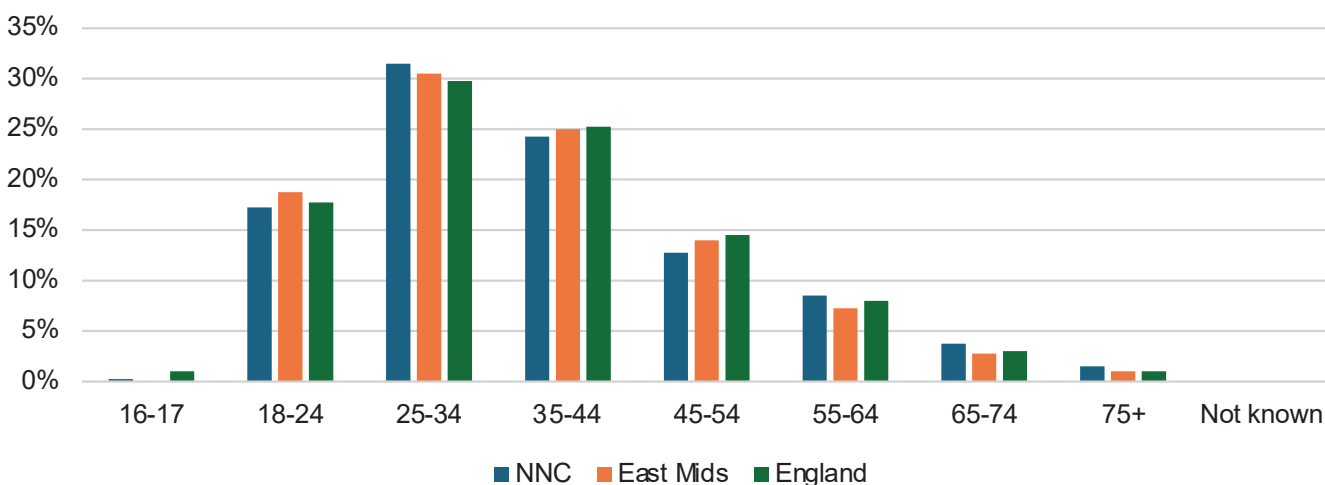
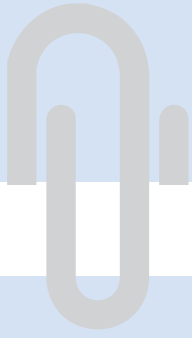


Figure 10: Age profile of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty in 2022/23 in North Northants, East Midlands, and England Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

It is nationally reported that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender are more likely to become homeless or can face discrimination in accessing housing. However, in the area of North Northamptonshire this is does not seem to be the case as no person approaching the Council has indicated this within their sexual orientation.

Families, especially with younger children, can be at risk from overcrowding and we know children living in a healthy, thriving home are more likely to go to school ready to learn. Our solutions and services need to fit with and respond to the incredible diversity of the North Northamptonshire people.

Case Study



Homelessness

Never give up!

The 'Never Give Up' project was established in May 2023 by North Northants Council's Rough Sleeping Team.

The project was established to offer entrenched rough sleepers' accommodation and is based on the 'Housing First Model.' The name Housing First can be misleading and is often misunderstood. Whilst it can sometimes look like other housing led approaches and embodies good practice seen across a range of services, Housing First is a specific model evidenced to be highly effective at ending homelessness for people with multiple and complex needs. Housing First services are defined through their adherence to an internationally recognised set of principles and require change in the attitude, culture, and approach of stakeholders to ensure they are delivered effectively and are sustainable.

The NNC model has a resolute Tenancy Support Worker to work intensively alongside Rough Sleepers, and with empathy, patience, and care, supports each individual to prepare for independent living. The following link explains more about the national model: [Mobilising Housing First toolkit: from planning to early implementation - GOV.UK](#)

One example of how well this model can work is *Steven's story:

Steven first engaged with NNC in 2021 but before that he was known to one of the four local borough and district Authorities, prior to Unitary. He was verified as rough sleeping in 2021 but had been homeless on and off for some time before that. At the stage of verification, we were experiencing the global pandemic titled 'Covid 19'. At this time NNC was operating the 'Everyone in' policy. When the NNC team first met Steven, he was living with his mother and sister, but sadly both relatives passed away within a short space of time and because Steven was not the tenant, he was not able to continue living in the property and had to leave his home.

After moving out, he was placed in Temporary Accommodation in his hometown where the Rough Sleeping Team worked with him to access eligible funding and supported him to sustain his current housing. It was from this interaction that the team learned of Steven's history that included having learning difficulties, was a former care leaver, lived experience of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and had spent some time in prison, all of which made him an extremely vulnerable person.

He had been identified as such whilst previously homeless and was financially abused and threatened with violence by other individuals who were also sleeping rough at the time. At this point he was struggling with depression and alcohol misuse, and whilst attending S2S and The Bridge projects intermittently, it was evident that he was entrenched and had no real commitment to resolve his situation at that time.

However, when the 'Never Give Up' Project came along, it marked a turning point for Steven. In October 2023, he was offered a self-contained property in North Northamptonshire as part of the project and was introduced to his Support Worker who would work with him for 7 hours per week to support him with his daily tasks.

When Steven moved into the flat, along with his mental health and alcohol battles he had incredibly low self-esteem, little trust and was reluctant to engage with his Support Worker who instantly recognised his care needs.

Shortly after his move in, his Support Worker arranged for Adult Social Care to assess Steven, and a care plan was put in place to support him with personal care, cleaning and maintaining his home, managing his financial obligations, and eventually setting up a savings plan. All of this included setting up systems for Steven to help him avoid being financially abused by others.

His care plan led onto helping Steven deal with all his issues, including his physical and mental health and he was set up with a local GP and was helped to attend GP and Nurse appointments. This led onto therapy sessions to help him deal with mental health issues, particularly from unresolved grief and past trauma.

From this intensive support, Steven has continually improved his health and wellbeing, learned to sustain his life and home, which has led to him making positive choices about what he wants from life, and he is showing a keen interest in learning to play piano.

Steven's attends a relapse prevention group but his need for intervention is diminishing and he is taking care of himself. His next steps are to register with the Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme to transition to independent living, a step that seemed impossible before entering the 'Never Give Up' project.

*Names have been changed to protect anonymity



Priority 3 Homeless

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
3.1 To develop and introduce a Private Rented Sector Scheme which includes financial and practical incentives to build effective relationships with landlords to reduce the number of evictions in the private rented sector	M	to reduce the level of homeless applicants and provide more security of tenure and tenancy sustainability
3.2 To ensure the priorities within the Councils Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy are delivered	M	To ensure the council homelessness offer meets actual needs Reducing the cost and impact of homelessness to other services
3.3 To work effectively with Supported Housing providers in North Northamptonshire through the introduction of a dedicated single access panel	M	To get people the support needed to sustain housing and avoid homelessness
3.4 Enhance the outreach work of the rough sleeper team,	S / M	
3.5 To produce a Homelessness directory of services and support available in North Northamptonshire to achieve an increased awareness and encourage people to seek help earlier and work together effectively	S	To act as a referral tool, monitor resources and reduce duplication of services
3.6 To enhance the North Northants Homelessness Forum links to share learning, processes and pathways including Duty to Refer to increase the number of early referrals of households at risk of homelessness.	S	To ensure consistency of service delivery and improve knowledge.
3.7 To review the main causes of tenancy failures and identify opportunities to intervene by learning from cases and implementing initiatives or adapting services as appropriate.	M	Reduction and Prevention of homelessness.
3.8 To increase tenancy support and introduce tenancy training opportunities for households that require this level of support to maintain their accommodation.	M	Reduction and Prevention of homelessness.
3.9 To regularly monitor rough sleeping data and identify the main causes and act on this intelligence where possible.	S	Reduction and Prevention of homelessness.
3.10 Ensure tenancy support funded through Government grants is effective in ensuring tenancies can be sustained for individuals who have experienced rough sleeping.	S	Resolve Rough Sleeping.
To continue to deliver a robust rough sleeping outreach and in-reach service to ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and non-recurring.	S	Resolve Rough Sleeping.

Priority 4

Supporting people to live healthy and independent lives in homes suited to their needs

The people of North Northamptonshire and their needs and desires are at the forefront of this strategy and are intertwined throughout every aim, ambition, and plan. Therefore, we hope this Strategy has made it abundantly clear throughout that our ambitions for North Northamptonshire are achievable only in partnership with our residents, and our partners in the private and public sector for the delivery of housing and the communities in which it sits.

The definition of 'Infrastructure' is the basic physical and organisational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, power supplies) needed for the operation of society and enterprise. In this strategy we use the term infrastructure in a broad spectrum of ways but the key to delivering infrastructure is to support housing in order to make and support communities.

For our neighbourhoods to be attractive places to live, work and invest in, an integrated and connected approach is essential. North Northants Council is currently driving huge changes in the way its public services are to be delivered. Housing in particular is being redesigned to ensure that it can deliver better outcomes for our residents. A key part of that service transformation will focus more broadly on safe, decent, and affordable homes, as they are the essential foundation for the work, we do to help residents and manage the impact on health and wellbeing that a lack of housing causes.

But it is not just about housing maintenance and delivery, it is about the places in which we stay. From estate management where we deal with issues arising because of change or growth, to designing new communities that fit into and complement our existing communities whilst seeking to housing meet needs and desires and raising housing quality and standards in existing homes across all tenures to achieve improved health and wellbeing for residents.

We know that living in poor or unsuitable housing conditions has a detrimental influence on physical and mental health outcomes. It undermines the ability of older people and vulnerable people to live safely and independently, and impacts childhood development and educational attainment. That is why partnership working is a core fundament to this strategy; we need to work together to achieve the best outcomes for our residents.

Through joined up working between council services and collaboration with external agencies and partners, we are working to deliver a range of services, initiatives and programs that will improve living conditions in North Northamptonshire's existing homes across all tenures. These measures aim to enhance the health and wellbeing of households and increase the sustainability of the housing stock.

Below is a case study that shows how collaborative working can achieve the best results and beyond that are the actions planned as a result of consultation and feedback from residents and stakeholders.

Case Study



The Homes We Need

Joined up teamwork to find bespoke housing solutions

Many of you may know that there are some complex cases on the housing waiting list that are waiting for accommodation to suit their specific needs. This is often entailing large family properties that need major adaptations and must be fully accessible for a wheelchair user.

The household member who has a disability may be the main or joint application (sometimes both), elderly parent living with the family or even a child. It may include large medical equipment like hospital beds, machines and household members needing lifts due to being unable to use a stairlift.

Households can be stuck in their current unsuitable accommodation across all tenures. Council, housing association, private sector tenants and can include families in temporary accommodation for long periods of time waiting for that suitable housing solution.

Unfortunately, Keyways landlords have a low supply of large family accessible homes and in particular ground floor flats or bungalows with 3+ bedrooms.

Teamwork

Several teams were involved to meet the housing needs of two complex cases recently.

- Development - Cydnie Pal
- Keyways - Samantha Dickson
- Housing Options Team - Julie McCafferty
- Community Occupational Therapy (OT) - Helen Jones
- Housing Property Services - Nick Farrag
- Housing Neighbourhood Services - Vicky Larrobino and Andrea Cooper

Development (Cydnie) is tasked with increasing the council's stock using RTB receipts. This is a large project, and she acquired two rarely available accessible properties on a new development in Feldspar Avenue, Wellingborough which have now become part of our HRA (council) stock in that area. The attributes of both properties are:

- Three-bedroom house
- Wide door frames
- Wide turning spaces
- Low switches
- Wheelchair accessible in and out of the property
- Wheelchair storage
- Dedicated space for a through floor lift
- Level bathing on the ground floor and first floor including a family bathroom
- Wide driveway with two parking spaces
- Level garden
- Large kitchen

Nominations

Both properties were allocated via a direct let selection process where Keyways (Sam) and the OT (Helen) identified two households. The process took into consideration the following:

- Housing need (Keyways band)
- Band effective date (time waited)
- Family size (using all bedrooms)
- Adaptations need (This included identifying a household that could not use a stairlift and required all ground floor or a through floor lift only)
- Assessed as being able to use a lift.

Household 1 have been in temporary accommodation since December 2021.

Household 2 have been living in an unsuitable housing association property since November 2021.

The homeless family have been supported by the Housing Options Team (Julie) and the Property Services Team (Nick) worked with the OT (Helen) to get the lifts installed.

Neighbourhood Services Team (Vicky and Andrea) are now in the process of viewing and signing up the tenancies very soon.

Two wonderful outcomes with several teams working together to find complex housing solutions.



Priority 4 Community

Action	Anticipated Delivery	Outcome
4.1 The homes we live in - Create a partnership model to provide an effective route to support households living in poor quality accommodation, particularly vulnerable households in the private sector, to improve their quality of life and reduce demand on public services by better enabling safe, independent living.	L	Work in partnership with supported housing partners to challenge landlords where housing is found to be lacking in quality.
4.2 Assistive Technologies - Commit to building all future council-owned or managed housing to a high energy efficiency or operationally net zero standard?	L	To ensure compliance with all modern housing, safety and building standards Pioneering net zero carbon standards for new homes on future development, and supporting schemes within the Council's own Local Authority New Build programme are to be built to Passivhaus principles.
4.3 Assistive technologies - Promote products or systems that support and assist individuals with disabilities, restricted mobility or other impairments to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.	L	Work with housing and health partners to deliver housing suitable for changing needs.
4.4 Deliver strategic approach to supported housing across North Northamptonshire, by exploring opportunities for devolved capital from Homes England and NHS England, to help achieve an effective and sustainable supported housing market.	L	Working with Housing Partners and Support Partners to enable residents to live independently in their homes for longer or to be able to find more suitable and sustainable accommodation if needs change.
4.5 Support the closure of the skills gaps - 29.4% of residents have a level 4 qualification as compared to the England average of 43.1% and 5.5% with no qualifications as compared to the England average of 6.4%.	L	Work with NNC Communities and Leisure and other partners to support enhancing the skills of residents in North Northamptonshire.
4.6 Educational attainment disparities with the rest of England	L	Work with NNC Communities and Leisure and other partners to support enhancing Learning in North Northamptonshire.
4.7 Set up and implement a regular forum for residents and their advocates to get together and monitor progress of the strategy and its delivery plan.	M	Through designed events and forums monitor progress against actions and review strategic needs.
4.8 Growing Population - Increasing Costs of Public Services	L	Working with partners to reduce costs to services / maintain reasonable charges / limit cost increases, wherever possible.
4.9 Influence development of new housing and communities with the right physical, social, and green infrastructure that promote healthy lifestyles and more specialist accommodation for those who require it, and to use the housing sector's workforce as key agents of behaviour change.	L	Working with Housing and Health Partners to ensure that existing housing and new stock is suitable, accessible, and fit for the future is integral to improving and maintaining our population's health.

Delivering Change

How we will get there

Where possible we have built this strategy on a comprehensive and robust evidence base, and will continue to invest in developing, mapping, improving, and extending our evidence to show what is working and to consider what changes are needed. The evidence base is complemented by the wealth of practical experience and knowledge of elected members, officers, industry professionals, voluntary groups, and, most importantly, residents, who contributed to the discussions which have informed this document.

We now need to move from strategising to delivery. We will produce a detailed Delivery Plan to complement this strategy and implement the actions required. This will be a living document, regularly reviewed, and updated as progress is made, new data emerges and the issues we are wrestling with evolve. But that level of detail must be based on an agreed, clear set of strategic priorities for action with the support of the broad range of partners, working across North Northamptonshire and further afield, who will be essential to making considerable progress.

Strategic Priorities for Action

The analysis and objectives we have set out in this Strategy have been structured around four main elements:



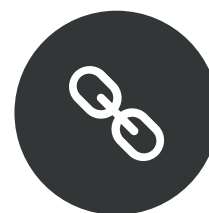
The homes we need



The homes we already have



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping



The connections between housing, people, and place

But the actions which flow from that do not necessarily fit within that structure – in fact, we should actively seek actions which address more than one element of our strategy. So, we set out in the table over the next few pages a series of connected strategic priorities for action at a North Northamptonshire level, designed to maximise the impact of our collective efforts across the area, and to complement and support the huge amount of work and investment going on every day at a borough, district and neighbourhood level. Alongside these are issues where we will look to influence and engage with Government to seek flexibilities or changes in national policy, or the ability to pilot innovative approaches. We also suggest headline measures of success – how in broad terms we will know if we are making progress. All of these will be developed in more detail in the Delivery Plan.

Briefly, the actions fall under four strategic priorities and link into the wider local and national plans:

Strategic Priority 1:

Build new homes across all tenures where people are proud to live.

- 1.1: Investing in truly affordable housing.
- 1.2: Increasing choices in the housing market for North Northamptonshire households
- 1.3: Researching and implementing new models of delivery

Strategic Priority 2:

Improving the quality of the existing housing stock to provide decent, energy efficient and safe homes.

- 2.1: Making a positive difference to the lives of private tenants.
- 2.2: Identifying pathways to volume domestic retrofit and reducing fuel poverty.

Strategic Priority 3:

Preventing homelessness to ensure everyone has access to decent, safe, and secure homes.

- 3.1: Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 3.2: Improving access to social housing for those who need it.

Strategic Priority 4:

Supporting people to live healthy and independent lives in homes suited to their needs.

- 4.1: Developing healthy homes services to support vulnerable households.

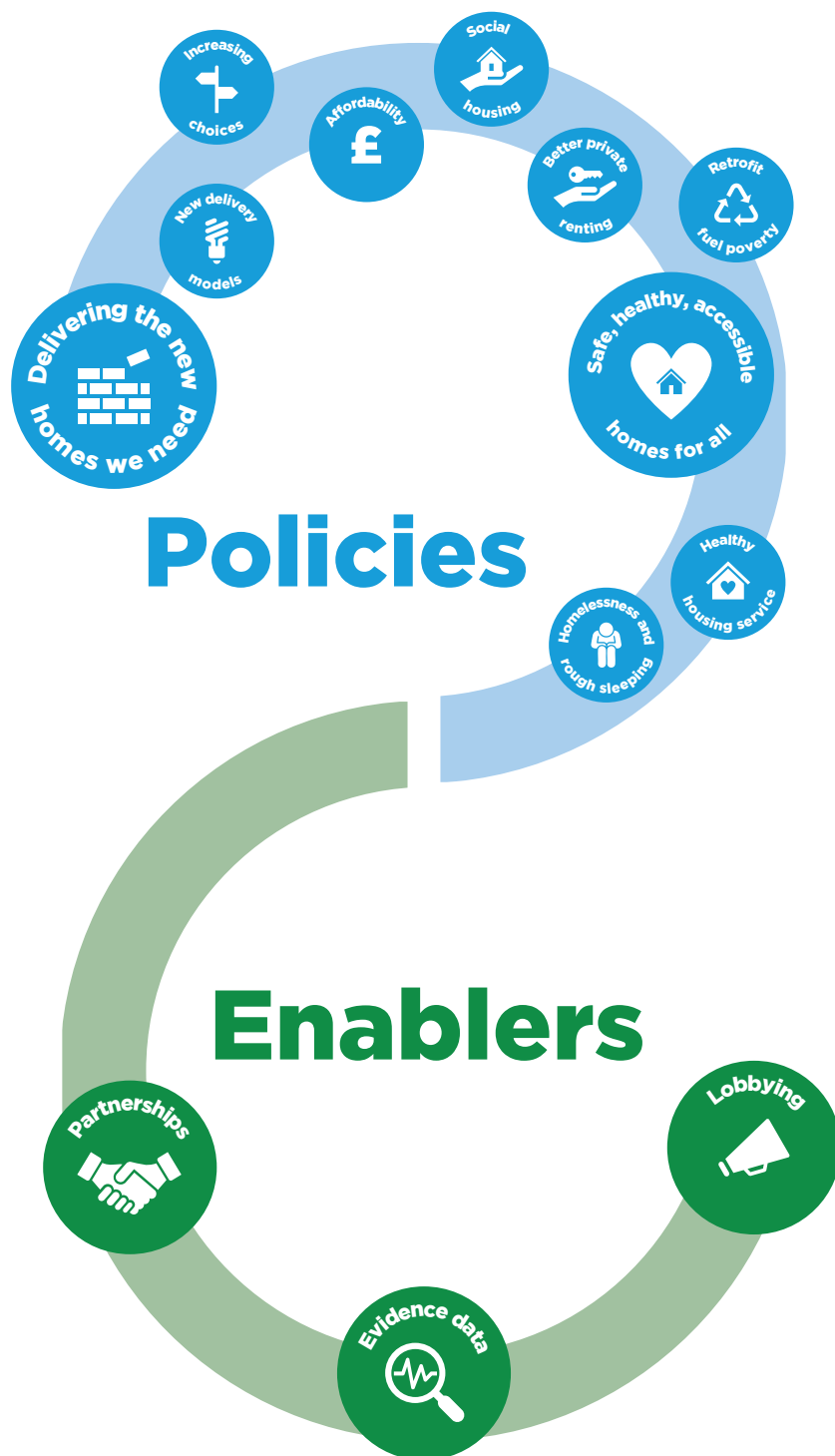
Alongside the strategic priorities set out in the table we identify three enablers, essential for the delivery of our ambitions – partnerships, evidence, and lobbying.

The diagram below illustrates the overall approach.

Strategic Enablers

Partnerships

Much of the action and delivery associated with this strategy will happen through partnerships, driven by local needs. North Northamptonshire-wide partnerships can complement local work, multiplying and sharing the impact of local learning and successes, and providing an effective way to tap into Government and other national and area wide resources and expertise.



The Unitary Authority itself is built on that partnership model, and our devolved structures give us a unique opportunity to bring together public sector partners including Northamptonshire's Health and Social Care Partnership, Fire and Rescue Service, Police Service and Transport Services. But a range of formal and informal relationships with other stakeholders will also be crucial if we are to maximise our ability to add value across our boroughs, districts, and neighbourhoods.

Our key partners include the North Northamptonshire's Housing Providers who collectively manage more than 16, 500 homes in North Northamptonshire and are committed to a wide programme of joint work on issues including health and social care, carbon reduction, homelessness, work and skills and ageing better, as well as developing new homes, capturing the breadth of our ongoing co-operation, and setting a future direction in support of this.

The [Homes England \(HE\) Strategic Plan](#) for 2023/28 mirrors the aims and objectives of North Northants Council with its mission to drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality homes and thriving places to support greater social justice, the levelling up of communities across England and the creation of places people are proud to call home.

They will:

- Facilitate the creation of the homes people need, intervening where necessary, to ensure places have enough homes of the right type and tenure.
- Promote the creation of high-quality homes in well-designed places that reflect community priorities by taking an inclusive and long-term approach.
- Support the creation of vibrant and successful places that people can be proud of, working with local leaders and other partners to deliver housing-led, mixed- use regeneration with a brownfield first approach.
- Build a housing and regeneration sector that works for everyone, driving diversification, partnership working, and innovation.
- Enable sustainable homes and places, maximising their positive contribution to the natural environment and minimising their environmental impact.
- Our mission We drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality homes and thriving places. This will support greater social justice, the levelling up of communities across England and the creation of places people are proud to call home a brownfield first.

We will continue to develop and strengthen our working relationship with Homes England; to maximise the impact of the capacity and expertise they are able to deploy to accelerate the delivery of new homes. Beyond those, we hope this Strategy has made it abundantly clear throughout that our ambitions for North Northamptonshire are achievable only in partnership with our residents, private landlords, developers and investors, voluntary sector, community groups , academic institutions and skills providers, NHS organisations, Government departments, infrastructure and energy providers and many others.

Evidence

The North Northants Strategic Housing Market Assessment provides a base for many of the key elements of the housing market in North Northamptonshire which we address in this Strategy. Local Plans, Home Energy and Retrofit, Housing Decarbonisation, New Build Standards, Sustainable Housing, Data Monitoring, Freen Skills Development, Community and Tenant Engagement are all plans that support creating a healthy housing market, which are based on analysis and evidence of the circumstances and complexities around their respective agendas in a North Northamptonshire context.

But there are issues where we need a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for positive change that we face. We will:

- Maintain, update, and extend our evidence base to provide a sound basis for decisions about intervention and investment, and work to fill gaps in that evidence, including around the condition of homes in the private sector, and the nature and extent of the private rented sector.
- Monitor our collective impact as we implement this Strategy and share and apply lessons being learned in North Northants Council and beyond to maximise that impact.

Lobbying

The North Northamptonshire model has evolved through a dialogue with national Government, over time and by agreement with Westminster and Whitehall establishing the unique governance model now in place. But there is still more to be done, more that can be achieved with greater leverage and control placed in the hands of North Northamptonshire. We will continue to make an evidenced case for greater devolution where we see it will make a real difference to the lives of North Northamptonshire's residents, and to influence and encourage national Government to amend legislation or regulation, invest differently, or devolve power and flexibility where it will allow us to make better progress.

Leading the change

We will be accountable to our members, partners and residents and will regularly and publicly report to, and be challenged on our progress, by the North Northants Council's Executive Advisory Panels relevant to the work being carried out, including Planning Communities, Active Communities, Connected Communities, Future Communities, Prosperous Communities and Sustainable Communities because the work of this strategy crosses every element of these panels.

We will ensure that there are effective means to continue the conversations, so that we retain the mix of the grassroots, professional and political views and experience that helped to create this strategy, and our Delivery Plan will give a visible and regular review of progress and future plans. We intend this Strategy to have a five-year life, but through the Implementation Plan and our reporting arrangements, and our monitoring of the challenges facing North Northamptonshire residents, we will regularly consider the need for a refresh of the Strategy.

We will work hand in hand with Government to make best use of the resources we have available. In return, we expect Government to ensure that those resources are fairly allocated, and that the formulas applied to their investment decisions offer a level playing field for projects in North Northamptonshire that will enable us to meet everyone's housing needs.

As we stated in the North Northants Council Housing Vision which preceded this Strategy, we know we cannot do this alone, and some of these issues could need a long and sustained effort to really resolve. As Unitary Authority we pledge to do all we can. But we know we will only succeed with the help, support and commitment of local communities, landlords, housing associations, developers, investors, landowners, the construction sector, utilities, central Government and many more. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you

This strategy is the product of co-production, involving extensive conversation, debate and input from local authority elected members and officers, housing partners, residents, community activists and voluntary organisations, and researchers living and working across North Northamptonshire. We are grateful to the many individuals and organisations who gave their time, energy, and ideas, including members and officers from North Northamptonshire; their local tenant and resident representatives, public, private, and voluntary sector partners who contributed to the workshop events and surveys designed to get their views, ideas and feedback.



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