

Housing Strategy

2014 - 2017



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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce a new Housing Strategy for Warwick District Council (WDC). This is essential at a time when wide-ranging new legislation has been enacted, not just in housing, but also in related policy areas such as planning, localism, public health, the environment and welfare reform.

The role that good quality housing can play in building and maintaining safe, inclusive and sustainable communities is well understood, as indeed is the contribution that housing makes to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals and their families. In establishing our plans for housing we are always mindful of these wider impacts and we have therefore embedded this strategy within the broader local policy framework set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Housing is a key priority within the Sustainable Community Strategy alongside four other themes: prosperity; health and well-being; safer communities; and sustainability. This strategy contributes to all of these:

- A healthy supply of housing within a reasonable distance of employment centres helps to support growth in the economy;
- Safe, warm, dry housing in a good state of repair and within existing

community networks has a clear and positive impact upon people's health and also helps to improve the educational attainment levels of children;

- Council services help to reduce crime by careful estate design in new developments, by prompt action to repair vandalism and clean up graffiti, and by appropriate management strategies for dealing with anti-social behaviour; and
- The design and location of new housing has major direct and indirect impacts upon sustainability, cutting carbon emissions through energy efficiency measures and reducing the number of car journeys.

We have developed this strategy through a wide-ranging consultation with our partners and stakeholders and this has provided us with a rich source of interesting ideas, many of which we have taken on board. We will continue to draw upon these ideas as we prepare a more detailed delivery plan to take forward the objectives of this strategy.

The consultation responses also helped us to shape our three strategic objectives for housing:

- Enabling and providing services that help people to sustain their homes;
- Meeting the need for housing across the district; and
- Raising standards of management, repair and improvement of existing housing and neighbourhoods.

Over the next three years, all of our actions as a council in housing and related areas will be consistent with these three priorities and by working within this framework, we will make Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.



Councillor Norman Vincett
Housing & Property Portfolio Holder

The context for the strategy

Warwick district covers an area of around 110 square miles in the Southern half of the county of Warwickshire in the West Midlands and is home to around 58,700 households (137,600 people).

The area includes the towns of Kenilworth, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick and Whitnash, which together accommodate around three-quarters of the population while the remainder live in a number of small rural villages many of which are in the green belt. The district is bordered to the south and west by Stratford-on-Avon district, to the east by Rugby borough, and to the north by Solihull and the city of Coventry.

The district is in a central part of the country and has good strategic transport links. The M40 runs across the area providing direct access to London and the south-east, and indirect links to the north-west and Scotland, and to the south-west via the M6 and the M5 respectively. There are junctions

of the M1 and A14 outside the district near Rugby, providing links to the north and east. There are good rail links to the rest of the West Midlands and to London. The government's preferred route for the new high-speed rail line "HS2" passes through the district.

Demographics

The population has grown significantly over the last ten years and is expected to continue to grow further in the future. The average age of the district's population is close to the national average (but the lowest in Warwickshire), while in fifteen-year age bands the only noticeable variations from the national pattern are slightly fewer people aged 0 to 14 and slightly more people aged 15 to 29.



Our district has the highest proportion of non “White-British” people in the county at 16.6% but this is still lower than is the case nationally and regionally. The largest ethnic groups in the district after White-British are “Asian/Asian British: Indian” (4.9%) and “Other White” (4.2%). Rugby (11.7%) and WDC (11.6%) have the highest proportions in the county of people who have come from abroad but these are still below the national average.

The types of household in the district show some interesting differences with the national, regional and county picture: we have one of the highest proportions of full-time students in the country (among the top 10%) and this feeds into an above average number of single-person households: the highest in the county.

Economy

Our local economy is diverse but three sectors account for over 70% of employment: “finance, IT, other business activities”; “distribution, hotels and restaurants”; and “public administration, education and health”.

Compared to national and regional rates our unemployment rate of 4.7% in 2012/13 is considerably lower (and has been throughout the period from 2004 to the present) while average earnings for employees living in the district are higher at £30,500 in 2012.

Deprivation, health and social care

In the 2011 census 53% of households were not deprived in any sense, the highest figure in the county, 10% higher than the national average and 13% higher than the West Midlands. Only 17% were deprived in more than one way compared to 24% nationally and 27% regionally.

The population of the district is relatively healthy with 84.5% of the population being in good or very good health, the highest in the county and better than the national and regional averages. This is also true of the narrower age band: those aged 16 to 64. More than 90% of people did not provide unpaid care, again the highest figure in the county exceeding national and regional averages. The 2013 Department of Health profile for WDC states that the health of people in the area is generally better than the England average.

Deprivation is lower, but an estimated 2,700 children in the district live in poverty and 17.6% of year 6 children are classed as obese. WDC fares significantly better than the national average on many health indicators but priority areas for action are identified as addressing alcohol misuse, smoking in pregnancy and tackling obesity.

Housing

There are 60,427 dwellings in the district and the profile is very different from the rest of the county. 18.5% of the stock is flats or maisonettes and a further 4.6% is flats in converted or shared houses, easily the highest in the county on both indicators. The overall figures for Warwickshire are 12.5% and 2.2% respectively. This has a distorting effect when looking at other property types but when this is removed and houses and bungalows only are considered, the spread of terraced (28%), semi-detached (40%) and detached properties (32%) is broadly similar to the county average.

Our district has the highest proportion of one-bed properties (10%) and the highest proportion of two-bed properties (28%) in the county and a significantly smaller number of three-bed properties (37%) although this is still our most common property size. We also had the second highest proportion of properties with more than three bedrooms meaning that WDC has the most balanced mix of properties by

size in the county.

In terms of tenure, again WDC differs from the rest of the county in that it has the lowest rate of owner-occupation (67%) and the highest rate of private renting (18%), both figures being higher than the national averages. The amount of social housing (13%) is the second lowest after Stratford-on-Avon and around 4% below the national average.

Data from recent stock condition surveys shows that the stock is mainly post-war with 73% of private housing and 85% of council housing having been built since 1945, compared to 59% and 81% respectively nationwide. However many of these dwellings are now over 50 years old.

The average (median) house price in WDC in 2010 was £210,000. This was 18% above the Warwickshire average and 43% above the West Midlands average indicating stronger demand for market housing compared to other parts of the region.

Analysis of Council Tax band data shows WDC to have property values fairly evenly spread across the price range: just over 26% of properties are in the lower value bands A and B (compared to 56% nationally) 48% are in the middle bands C and D (30% nationally) and just over 26% of properties in the district are in band E or higher compared to 13% nationally.

The policy framework

The national housing policy agenda

In 2010 the coalition government took office and set out its policy agenda with the overriding objective of reducing the deficit in the public finances. This agenda has been translated into action over the past three years through substantial pieces of legislation such as the Localism Act 2011 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and through two spending reviews: in October 2010 and June 2013.

The government's national policies for housing were set out in "Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England" in November 2011. This summarised a number of housing policies that were already being implemented at that time but added some new proposals aimed at unlocking the housing market and getting the building industry moving again. There have been further initiatives since then, particularly in the 2013 spending review.

The drivers for government housing policy are: increasing the number of available homes; improving the rented housing sector; providing housing support for older and vulnerable people; and helping people to buy a home.

There have also been significant reforms in a range of other policy areas that impact upon housing. These include planning policy, welfare reform and the Green Deal.

Regional policy context

The current government has a policy of localism, which it describes as having power exercised at the lowest practical level, close to the people who are affected by decisions. This has meant that since 2010 there has been less emphasis upon regional governance, with much of the regional and sub-regional governance infrastructure having been abolished.

However, there are still some requirements to work with our neighbouring authorities and we do still work with our partners on a regular basis where it is in our joint interests to do so. As an example the planning reforms mentioned above have removed regional planning structures but under the National Planning Policy Framework there is still a duty to cooperate with neighbouring local councils on issues that cross administrative boundaries, and we have recently commissioned a sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment with most of the other authorities in the county.

In terms of housing, the most significant regional document is the Warwickshire Local Investment Plan (LIP) which was drawn up in partnership between the five district councils, the county council and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The purpose of the LIP was to draw out key county-wide themes and

to help to direct investment, from the HCA and others, towards housing and regeneration schemes that could address the identified priorities. The four thematic priorities for the LIP are: meeting affordable housing growth needs; addressing rural housing growth and affordability; meeting housing needs of vulnerable groups; and improving existing housing stock. While the plan still carries weight, it was finalised in March 2011 and at the time of writing consideration is being given to how this should be updated for the future.

The other major housing-related issue that is tackled at county-level is the social care and health agenda. A Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) has been set up with strategic responsibility for producing a “Joint Strategic Needs Assessment” (JSNA) feeding into a strategy geared towards improving the health and wellbeing of the local population.

The JSNA identifies a number of key messages for housing: the demand for housing in Warwickshire will continue to grow; services for families will need to change to reflect the shifting make-up of family units and how they choose to live; welfare reform will have a key impact; and housing affordability is likely to remain an issue in Warwickshire. The resulting Interim Health & Wellbeing

Strategy has an aspiration that “In Warwickshire people will live longer, in better health and be supported to be independent for as long as possible. We will see the people of Warwickshire free from poverty, have a decent standard of living and no child will start their lives at a disadvantage or be left behind.” It identifies three priorities: “mobilising communities to develop and sustain their independence, health and well-being”; “improving access to services”; and “public services – working together”.

Our vision as a council

In 2009 the Local Strategic Partnership for WDC, known as the Warwick Partnership, produced “A Shared Vision – Warwick District’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 – 2026”. This provided an overarching vision for the whole area and sets the strategic direction for all of the work of the district council, including housing. The vision of the strategy, supported by the identification of four priority themes and five cross-cutting themes, was:

“Warwick District, a great place to live, work and visit, where we aspire to build sustainable, safer, stronger and healthier communities.”

The Warwick Partnership no longer exists and the strategy is now four years old but a recent review by senior managers found that it is still largely fit for purpose. In particular the vision is still appropriate and, after some minor amendment, so are the themes, which are now as follows:

The refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy	
Theme	Strategic aim
Prosperity	To improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Warwick District by pursuing a balanced and sustainable growth agenda that delivers improvements in each of these areas whilst protecting those things that make Warwick District special.
Health & well-being	To enable and encourage the people of Warwick District to have equal access to a healthy life and sense of wellbeing, ensuring that our actions are aligned with the Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Board's Strategy.
Housing	To address the housing needs of those who wish to live and work in Warwick District.
Safer communities	To work in partnership to reduce violent crime, anti-social behaviour and re-offending.
Sustainability	To minimise our use of natural resources and CO2 emissions, improve the energy and water efficiency of our buildings and operations, and source as much of our energy as possible from renewable sources. We will also act as a lead in the community on climate change and energy efficiency issues.

Geographically, based upon deprivation indices, the strategy targeted three areas, Brunswick ward, Crown ward and West Warwick. The aim was that no area should be in the worst 30% of small areas in the country.

Our housing priorities

A housing strategy needs to take account of the national context but also sits within the broad policy agenda set by the Sustainable Community Strategy referred to above. We also felt that it was important to consult widely. Fuller details of the process are set

out at the end of this document.

Taking account of consultation the priorities for the strategy are:

- Enabling and providing services that help people to sustain their homes;
- Meeting the need for housing across the district; and
- Raising standards of management, repair and improvement of existing housing and neighbourhoods.

Further information is set out on the following pages about each priority, including detailed delivery plans.

Objective 1

Enabling and providing services that help people to sustain their homes

Tackling this priority will help to make WDC a great place to live, work and visit by:

- Supporting all sections of the community, including the homeless and people with specific needs, to quickly and effectively resolve any housing issues that they have;
- Ensuring a healthy local population, able to live independently with appropriate support where necessary; and
- Integrating housing and other services to ensure a co-ordinated approach to tackling wider issues such as crime and disorder, environmental improvement and educational attainment.

Why we think this is a priority:

Although our district as a whole comes out very well on many indicators when compared to national averages, nevertheless there are still some deprived areas and people in our communities who are in need of help to enable them to live independently or maintain their homes. For example some 14% of households have support needs and 11% of these (around 900 households) currently live in unsuitable housing. Population growth would add an estimated 3,000 households with a support need over the next twenty years.

The most common support needs are for alterations to bathrooms and toilets, for emergency alarms, for help maintaining the home, or for level-access showers.

The age structure of the population is projected to change with people aged 60 or more estimated to increase by 32%. Furthermore the 75-and-over population is projected to increase by 53% and the 85-and-over population by 84% with clear implications for the type of housing that will be needed in the future.

20% of our households are living in fuel poverty, above the national average, and this position is likely to worsen as fuel cost increases continue to exceed inflation. Over 21% of housing falls into the two lowest ratings for Energy Performance Certificates.

What people we consulted said:

- Helping people to live independently – a higher profile for the Home Improvement Agency and Telecare.
- What housing support will be available for women fleeing abusive relationships?
- Educate householders to cope with benefit changes and money management.
- Make support services attractive to young people.

- Make stronger links to Health & Well-being and Sustainability objectives.
- Affordability: people are anxious about paying rent and other bills now.
- Provide effective housing advice services.
- Secure specialist housing support services for vulnerable customers, i.e. OAPs and disabled of all ages.
- Vulnerable people are exposed to high levels of risk in some areas where insufficient support leads to people who are drunk or drugged accessing shared property.
- Disabled young people have less residential learning options because of cutbacks.
- The under-occupation charge has created unprecedented levels of stress and concern for disabled people and their carers.
- Under-occupation charge should apply to pensioners as well.
- The under-occupation charge is unfair due to lack of one-beds.
- There is little choice for people using care homes, some of those homes are very institutional and are run in very outdated styles, leaving people isolated from communities.
- There is a need to build on the building blocks of success already in place by mapping those services currently available. This will reduce overlapping, duplication and start to reduce a silo way of working that is rife across the district.
- Need for an Information Sharing Protocol for key players.
- Understand our customers in order to assess the need for services in the district.
- Set a Homelessness Action Plan based around: better partnership working; sustainable communities; preventing homelessness; making better use of existing stock; new build; and good practice.
- Hold local forums for young people on domestic & financial management.
- Promote balanced and sustainable communities, improve energy efficiency and affordable warmth.
- Gypsies and travellers using sites and not moving on.
- Benefits should go direct to landlords.
- Work with credit unions.
- Assist people with taking in lodgers.
- Where does the third sector fit in (partnership working)?
- Gather and publicise all grants available to assist with fuel bills.
- Travellers – valid information not hearsay.
- Regular inspections of property may highlight a person’s need for support – home visits.
- How can social media be used?

Objective 1: Delivery Plan

1.1 Working with Warwickshire County Council as it identifies its priorities for housing-related support services that have in the past been funded by the Supporting People regime, such as people with mental health problems, people suffering domestic abuse, substance mis-users, and homeless people with support needs.

Resources:	An officer with responsibility for taking this forward will need to commit perhaps 2 – 3 days per month in 2014/15 reducing to 1 – 1.5 days per month for 2015/16 and 2016/17.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with WCC staff. • Reviewing local data and defining local needs. • Providing local data on request. • Briefing local service providers on a regular basis. • Supporting bids to provide services that meet defined local needs.

1.2 Being fair and supportive but firm. This means using all available means to provide help and support to those who need it but also using our enforcement powers as a local authority for those who are causing problems (to themselves or to others) if they refuse to engage with or respond to our offer of help.

Resources:	Staff time – initial briefing by managers to staff and dealing with occasional queries on application of the approach.
Manager:	All
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation during 2014/15: managers of staff who deal with members of the public will need to think through how this relates to their service area and the enforcement powers that they have. • They will then need to brief their relevant staff that this approach has been approved by the council and how it should be applied.

1.3 Working with our partners across all sectors to support people in financial difficulties.	
Resources:	Existing staff working with other partners
Manager:	Jacky Oughton and Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund/Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential of developing a programme of regular Money Advice sessions in partnership with other housing providers in the area (initial pilot at Brunswick Healthy living Centre) by June 2014. Develop a series of practical energy saving advice sessions to be delivered in the community on a regular basis, targeting “fuel poor” (initial pilot aimed at Brunswick Healthy living centre by June 2014. Develop a programme of handy money advice tips to deliver to all “mother and toddler” groups across the district by September 2014.

1.4 Redesigning our service structure, reviewing policies and procedures across the service and developing service level agreements, internally and with service providers, to deliver better outcomes for customers.	
Resources:	Being identified through the redesign project but is likely to result in an overall saving.
Manager:	All
Funding:	General Fund/Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustaining Communities and Business Support redesigns to be substantially complete by September 2014. Asset Management redesign to commence when Asset Manager has been appointed and completed to a later timetable.

1.5 Reviewing and updating the homelessness strategy.	
Resources:	Approximately 45 working days at senior officer level for review and updating. Resources for implementation will be identified in the new strategy. Other costs: hospitality for meetings, printing and stationery, publicity, oncosts and admin.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw up project plan for strategy development including homelessness review and consultation arrangements by 30/4/2014. Set up Steering Group by 30/4/2014. Review current strategy action plan by 31/7/2014. Implement project plan to develop new strategy by 31/12/2014. Report to Executive by 31/3/2015. New strategy takes effect from 1/4/2015.
Comments:	This is a statutory strategy and a new one is required to take effect from 1st April 2015.

1.6 Working with Warwickshire County Council on its extra-care programme providing more flexible housing-with-support options for older people.	
Resources:	Time commitment of Housing Strategy & Development Officer, approximately 10 days per year, capital if required. Capital funds to come from commuted sums if possible, otherwise to be bid for.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<p>Ongoing actions across the three-year period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with WCC staff. • Appraise demands in light of new SHMA and WCC data analysis. • Assess current and projected supply. • Agree numbers required. • Consider sites as they arise. • Work with WCC & RP partners to deliver schemes.

1.7 Continuing to provide grants/loans to help low-income owner-occupiers with essential repairs or to rectify dangerous conditions.	
Resources:	Existing staffing resources to review policy. Capital budget for 2014/15 already in the budget process. Bids for future years to be assessed in light of new policy.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the website. • Review the existing policy. • Undertake consultation. • Report proposals to Executive by September 2014. • Prepare to implement policy by 1st April 2015.
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

1.8 Working with partners to raise awareness and educate residents on energy efficiency issues, assisting with grants and loans where appropriate and seeking to raise energy ratings, particularly in the private rented sector using the Housing, Health & Safety Rating System.	
Manager:	Asset Manager/Sustainability Officer
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	This action will be developed further following the appointment of a Sustainability Officer and the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service.

1.9 Continuing to seek a proportion of properties built to the Lifetime Homes Standard on new-build schemes.

Resources:	Housing Strategy & Development Officer’s time in conjunction with Planning Policy.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Await the outcome of the government’s Housing Standards Review. • Consult with RPs, to be concluded within 3 months of conclusion of government review. • Develop new affordable housing policy (or Supplementary Planning Document) for the Local Plan.
Comments:	This is the continuation of an existing policy. It will be considered within the Local Plan process.

1.10 Expecting new developments to achieve “secured by design” standards for the estate layout.

Resources:	Housing Strategy & Development Officer’s time in conjunction with Planning Policy.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Await the outcome of the government’s Housing Standards Review. • Consult with RPs, to be concluded within 3 months of conclusion of government review. • Develop new affordable housing policy (or Supplementary Planning Document) for the Local Plan.
Comments:	This is the continuation of an existing policy. It will be considered within the Local Plan process.

1.11 Requiring new-build affordable housing to meet a minimum of Code For Sustainable Homes level 3 standard.

Resources:	Housing Strategy & Development Officer’s time in conjunction with Planning Policy
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Await the outcome of the government’s Housing Standards Review. • Consult with RPs, to be concluded within 3 months of conclusion of government review. • Develop new affordable housing policy (or Supplementary Planning Document) for the Local Plan.
Comments:	This is the continuation of an existing policy. It will be considered within the Local Plan process.

1.12 Gaining a better understanding of the support needs of our tenants through annual customer visits, making every contact count by using feedback from repairs and gas servicing contractors to prioritise visits to customers.	
Resources:	IT systems, and staffing, buy in from contractors etc.
Manager:	Jacky Oughton
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation to commence in April 2015. • Devise and set up a rolling programme of timetabled visits to all Warwick District Council tenancies, aiming for annual visits by 2017. • Identify triggers for early visits required for those tenants experiencing difficulties sustaining their tenancy.

1.13 Reviewing the information provided to tenants and applicants	
Resources:	Staff time, printing costs, IT time for web development.
Manager:	Jacky Oughton/Abigail Hay
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account/General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a Working Group and wider “reading group” during 2015/16. • Collect and review all published information for tenants and applicants during 2015/16. • Re-write as necessary during 2016/17. • Consult, finalise and produce new information for use with effect from 1/4/2017.



Objective 2

Meeting the need for housing across the district

Tackling this priority will help to make WDC a great place to live, work and visit by:

- Managing the continued economic and population expansion of the district;
- Maintaining stable communities, particularly in rural areas, by meeting the considerable need for affordable housing from local people; and
- Providing a better balance between the market-rented and non-market rented sectors.

Why we think this is a priority:

The population of WDC grew rapidly, by 11.9% between 2000 and 2010, and is projected to continue to grow at around 0.7% per year over the next twenty years, an additional 18,300 people or 11,630 households by 2031. Our Revised Development Strategy, published in June 2013, proposed planning for an additional 12,300 homes in the district between 2011 and 2029.

The net annual need for affordable housing exceeds the net need for additional homes due to a historic backlog in meeting need and to loss of affordable housing through Right To Buy. The number of people on the council’s housing register has been around or above the 3,000 level for each of the last eight years.

The number of homeless enquiries more than doubled in four years from 2009/10 to 2012/13 and the number that we accepted a duty to rehouse was two-and-a-half times greater in 2012/13 than in 2009/10.

We have a statutory duty to meet the needs of the gypsy and traveller community and there is an identified need for 31 permanent and 6 to 8 transit pitches over the 15 year period of the Local Plan.

Affordability is a huge issue in the district with the highest house prices and private sector rents in the county. We have the largest private rented sector in Warwickshire and it is still growing but anecdotally it appears landlords may be less willing to take tenants on Local Housing Allowance due to welfare reforms.

What people we consulted said.

- Develop specialist properties for older people with support on hand if needed.
- Explore how to make better use of the private rented sector to meet housing need.
- Build more properties.
- Rural needs – help rural communities identify need. Consensus from rural housing needs surveys seems to be that small discreet schemes are acceptable, responding to local need, taking into account local design etc.

- Student accommodation should be encouraged in the vicinity of the university.
- Adequate housing should be situated near to employment to cut down on commuting.
- Need for more one-bedroom and smaller accommodation to get people out of larger accommodation.
- Need to help people into shared ownership/first-time buying due to high costs.
- There appears to be a big increase in homelessness locally with many people sleeping rough – need research to find out why this is.
- Need more suitable accommodation for disabled people – young people forced to stay at home with family rather than live independently.
- Need more council housing.
- Work with planners to look at land usage.
- Need a proper analysis of what housing is required and where.
- Look at ways of increasing income/ subsidies etc to make land more affordable to social housing providers.
- Build council housing or council could manage housing association housing.
- Social housing quota should be based on square footage.
- Provide incentives to build on infill sites as these are more expensive than out-of-town areas.
- Increase grants to encourage tenants to buy a property on the market.
- Underwrite bonds to private sector landlords.
- Accommodation for homeless – need a “transit” scheme, also need a foyer for single homeless people.
- Allocations policy – put sitting tenants first; local people should get priority.
- Other solutions – barges, trailer/caravan parks, pre-fabs, park homes, self-build, “kit” houses.
- Classify green-belt into poor or good quality and allow building on poor sites.
- Plan for population growth – based on accurate information and local consultation with residents.
- Look at Dutch model – houses in three-storeys where different generations live together, one on each level with mortgage for 100 years which each generation takes over.
- Make sure developers provide the social housing levels agreed at the start of developments.
- Stop rehousing people that own their own properties.
- There is an under-supply of affordable housing at entry-level to the market.
- Look at transport to allow people to live outside the area to decrease demand.
- New developments should have mixed sizes and tenures: evens out values.
- Land acquisition for council build programme.

Objective 2: Delivery Plan

2.1 By addressing the need for more homes:

2.1.1 Updating and broadening our understanding of district and local housing markets and needs and responding to the findings of the new Joint Strategic Housing market Assessment.

Resources:	Staff time. £10k per year for Rural Housing Enabler to undertake rural needs surveys.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new affordable housing policy to support the Local Plan. • Incorporate new policy into new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. • Continue programme of rural surveys through Rural Housing Enabler. • Re-procure the Rural Housing Enabler service annually.

2.1.2 Completing the development of the new Local Plan to identify the land needed to deliver the housing that the district needs.

Resources:	Already in place within Planning Policy.
Manager:	Dave Barber (Planning Policy)
Funding:	General Fund (non-housing)
Specific actions and milestones:	Subject to a separate action plan and timetable.

2.1.3 Ensuring that larger housing schemes include an appropriate proportion of affordable housing and a sustainable mix of property types and sizes.

Resources:	Staff time
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	This will be part of the affordable housing policy to inform the new Local Plan/ Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. It follows on from 2.1.1 above.

2.1.4 Working with our partner housing associations to ensure that new affordable homes are provided by a mixture of social landlords across the district.

Resources:	Time commitment for Housing Strategy & Development Officer. Capital if necessary from commuted sums and future bids.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing across the three-year period. • Review the Joint Commissioning Partnership during the second half of 2014. • Actions to follow this review.

2.1.5 Creatively using the council's assets and finance to deliver further new homes working in partnership with Waterloo Housing Group through the W2 Joint Venture.

Resources:	Staff time plus capital, revenue and land as appropriate within the parameters laid down by the JV and subject to ongoing monitoring by the Project Board.
Manager:	Head of Housing & Property Services
Funding:	General Fund/Housing Revenue Account/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with WHG to produce new homes. • Continue ongoing monitoring through Project Board. • Review the J.V. by December 2014. • Decide whether, and if so how, to take the J.V. forward into 2015 and beyond.

2.1.6 Investigating the best way of using the new financial freedoms to build council housing.

Resources:	Initial investigation will require officer and member time. Implications of decision will carry resource implications that will be considered as part of the investigation
Manager:	Head of Housing & Property Services
Funding:	General Fund/Housing Revenue Account/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review consultant's recommendations. • Assess implications and follow-up actions required with support from an external facilitator. • Report to council in March 2014. • Implement council resolution.
Comments:	This needs to be link with the development of an Asset Management Strategy.

2.1.7 Looking to provide for the identified gypsy and traveller needs through the planning system.	
Resources:	Resources for Local Plan development are already in place.
Manager:	Dave Barber (Planning Policy)
Funding:	General Fund (non-housing)
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be developed through the Local Plan process.

2.1.8 Restricting rents on Affordable Rent homes so that the average on any scheme is no more than the mid-point between average social rent and 80% of average market rent.	
Resources:	Staff time
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement from 1 January 2014. Provide potential landlords with details of acceptable rents on schemes coming forward. Keep a record of agreed affordable rents. Monitor policy and bring forward recommendations for change as required in December 2014.

2.1.9 Refreshing our approach to the provision of rural housing, taking account of the new scheme for neighbourhood planning and the new Local Plan policies on village housing options.	
Resources:	Time commitment of Housing Strategy & Development Officer and an officer in Planning Policy.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with Rural Housing Enabler to discuss current arrangements and suggestions for improvement. Consider the role of neighbourhood planning and how this connects with affordable housing and the Local Plan. Review best practice in other areas/agencies. Develop new policy approach to incorporate into Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

2.2 By making the best use of existing stock:	
2.2.1 Developing a “Buy To Flip” policy whereby the council and its housing association partners consider purchasing existing homes for sale to let them on social or affordable rents.	
Resources:	Staff time within the landlord service will be needed to identify properties and process the purchases. Capital will be required, either upfront or borrowing against HRA income, to pay for the properties. Housing Strategy & Development Officer will need to liaise with partners to stimulate their involvement. Capital may be required to support their purchases and this would have to come from commuted sums.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund/Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish legal position and delegated powers by 31/5/14 • Identify preferred areas, property types, sizes and price range by 31/5/14 • Liaise with RPs over their role by 31/5/14 • Draft policy by 31/10/14 • Report to Executive for approval by 30/11/14 • Implement policy from 1/1/15
Comments:	This needs to link up with the development of an Asset Management Strategy.

2.2.2 Reviewing the housing allocations policy, giving consideration to prioritising existing tenants, local connection policies, the potential use of fixed term tenancies and the handling of applicants with no housing need.	
Resources:	Officers time, admin costs for meetings: room hire, refreshments, printing of new stationery, IT time for systems development.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current policy against new legislation and guidance by 30/3/2014. • Consult RPs as to how well the current policy meets their needs by 30/3/2014. • Identify areas where change is required by 25/5/2014. • Draft new policies by 6/7/2014. • Statutory consultation from 7/7/2014 to 28/9/2014. • Finalise policy and report to Executive for approval in November 2014. • Prepare for implementation by 1/4/2015.

2.2.3 Looking for new ways to incentivise people who are under-occupying their homes to move to more appropriate accommodation.

Resources:	To be identified. Committee approval will be sought once this has been done.
Manager:	Jacky Oughton
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account/General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate, by March 2015, how we could use the Tenants Incentive Grant scheme budget differently, to enable more tenants to receive the assistance that they may need.

2.2.4 Reviewing and updating our strategy for bringing empty homes back into use.

Resources:	Officer time, admin costs for meetings: room hire, refreshments, stationery, printing of new forms, booklets etc. The strategy itself will identify the resources needed to tackle empty homes.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review performance against existing strategy in first quarter of 2014/15 Develop new strategy to include bid for resources during 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2014/15 Implement new strategy from April 2015 subject to resources
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

2.2.5 Looking for opportunities to create more appropriate housing with a higher degree of energy efficiency by the modernisation, remodelling or regeneration of existing housing schemes and estates.

Resources:	Ongoing staff time for considering regeneration opportunities. Specific regeneration projects will have substantial resource requirements that will be defined on a project-by-project basis and bids submitted at the appropriate time.
Manager:	Asset Manager & Abigail Hay
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account/Capital Programme/General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing monitoring of council stock for regeneration needs and opportunities. The redevelopment of Fetherston Court has a separate project plan in place and resources identified. The intention, subject to planning, is to start on site in the second half of 2014 with completion by mid-2016 .
Comments:	This should be tied into the development of an Asset Management Strategy.

Objective 3

Raising standards of management, repair and improvement of existing housing and neighbourhoods

Tackling this priority will help to make WDC a great place to live, work and visit by:

- Improving living conditions for residents of the district;
- Ensuring warm, dry housing in a good state of repair, leading to a clear and positive impact upon people's health and improving the educational attainment levels of children;
- Improving affordability through improvements to the energy efficiency of the existing stock;
- Ensuring that housing conditions are not a barrier to employers seeking to locate in the district; and
- Contributing to the wider attractiveness of the built environment.

Why we think this is a priority.

Private sector

19% of the entire stock was built before 1919 and is therefore likely to have higher ongoing maintenance costs. This rises to 34% if we look solely at private-rented properties.

24% of the stock (32% of private rented properties) fails the Decent Homes Standard (a government measure of whether housing is adequate). In terms of failure reasons, 15% contain a serious ("category one") health and safety hazard, 10% are hard to heat and keep warm, 3% are in need of repair and 0.4% lack modern facilities †. Unsurprisingly failures are more common among older properties but there is one exception to this: properties built between 1965 and 1980 have significantly more failures than would be expected. This is due to a large number of purpose-built flats and other dwellings in this age band that are hard to heat and keep warm.

Energy efficiency in the private stock is around the national average of 52 on the government's Standard Assessment Procedure rating where 1 is poor and 100 is excellent.

As at 31 May 2013 there were 1,131 empty properties (2% of the private stock) of which 368 had been empty for between 6 months and two years and 197 had been empty for more than two years.

† These do not add up to 24% due to some properties with multiple failures.



Houses in multiple occupation traditionally have more difficulties associated with them in terms of management standards, fire safety and welfare of occupants. There are almost 2,000 of these in the district, higher than the national average, and almost 80% don't have to have a licence from the council. Similar issues arise in properties converted into flats and there are known to be well over 1,000 such flats in the district.

Social sector

The majority of properties have been built more recently and therefore have fewer problems in terms of property condition and vacancies: all of the council's housing, and all but 12 housing association properties, meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Over the next 50 years it is estimated that we will need to spend £661 million on our council housing stock of which £215 million is on cyclical, responsive and void repairs and £364 million is on capital works (the remainder is on overheads, administration etc.)

It took 35 days on average to relet a vacant council home during 2012/13.

What people we consulted said.

- Persons in properties should look after them so they won't become slums.
- There should be a significant effort made to engage private landlords.
- Repair the older houses.
- There is a small band of landlords whose houses are in poor condition.
- Ensure stock continues to meet Decent Homes Standards.
- Redevelop low demand and poor housing.
- Big issue getting small repairs done, e.g. handyman service at Age UK.
- Need to promote balanced and sustainable communities, improve energy efficiency and affordable warmth.
- Look at long-term empty homes to see if they can be brought back into use.
- Grants for adaptations appear to have ceased leaving families and individuals in overcrowded and poor situations.
- Customer-focussed housing provision is thin on the ground, despite policies around person-centred approaches.
- Too much Buy To Let in Leamington that is then let out to students.
- Set higher standards for new-build housing (energy efficiency).
- Have a grant (or loan) scheme for private sector landlords.

- Empty properties: use penalties and incentives.
- Insulation grants – engage landlords by promoting the benefits to them.
- Talk to lettings agents – they have more influence on landlords.
- Increase council stock condition information and develop most cost-efficient strategy to repair or re-build.
- What are you doing for leaseholders?
- Advise, assist and educate private landlords.
- Improve void turnaround times in council housing.
- All rented properties should be licensed.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) changing the face of communities. Do we need more purpose-built student housing?
- Consider council stock use and convert properties in line with need and demand.
- More HMOs to provide more and cheaper accommodation. By licensing these WDC appear to be restricting this. Policy should be looked at.
- WDC stock – continue insulation programme.
- Train other professionals to identify cat 1 hazards and report to the council.
- Incentivise landlord accreditation – make it valuable to landlords.



Objective 3: Delivery Plan

3.1 Working to develop ways to inform and advise private landlords and tenants of their rights and obligations.	
Resources:	Existing staffing. Additional resources may be needed if it is felt that the Tenants’ Charter doesn’t fully cover what it needs to.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to inform landlords through presentations at Landlords’ Forum • Monitor government proposals for a new “Tenants’ Charter” • Consider what further information may be needed for tenants following the publication of the charter
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

3.2 Developing an enforcement policy for private sector housing to be followed where landlords fail to engage or respond to more informal approaches.	
Resources:	Existing staffing resources.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing policy and identify the changes needed • Draw up new policy proposals • Report to Executive for approval by September 2014 • Implement new policy
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

3.3 Refreshing our data on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and investigating whether to extend the licensing of HMOs to other HMOs not currently covered.	
Resources:	The data collection and analysis exercise is a substantial piece of work that will require additional resources of around £7,000.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid during 2014/15 for funding for data collection project • Subject to resources carry out data collection and analysis exercise during 2015/16 • Draw up proposals • Consult on proposals • Policy decision and implementation to follow during 2016/17
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

3.4 Investigating whether to introduce additional licensing for buildings converted into flats and also for shared houses.	
Resources:	See 3.3 above
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	See 3.3 above
Comments:	This will be run in tandem with item 3.3 above. This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

3.5 Completing a pilot scheme remodelling Home Improvement Agency services on a cross-tenure basis across southern Warwickshire and evaluating the results.	
Resources:	Resources for pilot scheme already in place. Subsequent resource requirements will be identified in the review phase.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund/Capital Programme
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the pilot scheme by 31/12/2014 • Review the outcome of the pilot by 31/3/2015 • Report to Executive with further proposals in first part of 2015/16 • Implementation to follow in second part of 2015/16
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

3.6 Building on our working relationship with the University of Warwick in relation to student housing in the district.	
Resources:	Existing resources
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	General Fund
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with existing working arrangements • Monitor their effectiveness • Adapt as necessary over the three year period
Comments:	This action may be subject to change when the redesign of the asset management side of the housing service is progressed.

3.7 Reviewing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to ensure that our approach to managing, maintaining and improving our own stock remains relevant and up-to-date.	
Resources:	Part of existing staffing responsibilities
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly operational reviews • Annual strategic review
Comments:	This needs to link with the development of an Asset Management Strategy

3.8 Engaging with our council tenants to develop a WDC Standard for homes and neighbourhoods that exceeds the Decent Homes Standard and that embraces customer choice where possible.

Resources:	Policy development will be done by existing staff but resources to deliver the new standard will be a consideration as part of the policy development process and will need to feed into the Asset Management Strategy and business plan.
Manager:	Jacky Oughton
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to be in place by end of December 2014 • New standards to be in place by April 2015
Comments:	This can be introduced as part of the service standards being developed out of the Tenant Panel Away Day Action Plan due to be in place by April 2015

3.9 Looking at how to creatively manage our housing assets by developing a new Asset Management Strategy.

Resources:	This will be led by the Asset Manager but may require external support from consultants, stock condition surveyors etc. A full project plan will be worked up by the Asset Manager and any new resources required will be subject to the normal bidding process.
Manager:	Asset Manager
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	To be developed during 2015/16
Comments:	This is connected to a number of other actions as set out earlier in the plan and may be subject to change following the appointment of an Asset Manager.

3.10 Reviewing our management of leaseholder properties.

Resources:	Staffing resource in place. The review may identify a need for additional resources (or savings that could be made) and appropriate bids will be made if required.
Manager:	Abigail Hay
Funding:	Housing Revenue Account
Specific actions and milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review IT systems by 1/6/14 • Develop policies and procedures by 1/10/14 • Prepare action plan for service improvement by 31/12/14 • Implement action plan with new system to be fully operational by 31/12/15

The strategic process

In early 2013 a suggested template for the priorities for the strategy was prepared and approved by the council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This proposed three draft priorities: "meeting housing need"; "improving existing stock"; and "support services".

While undertaking a desktop analysis of the strategic environment within which the strategy was being developed, we publicised and circulated these priorities for comment to:

- Parish, town, district and county councillors;
- Warwick District Council housing staff and tenants' representatives;
- The Housing Sounding Board (which includes a range of voluntary sector organisations);
- Warwickshire County Council's Public Health, Supporting People and Social Care teams;
- Local housing associations' development and management staff;
- Warwickshire Rural Community Council;
- Neighbourhood forums;
- Neighbouring local authorities;
- Landlord Steering Group; and
- The Local Enterprise Partnership.

In addition an article was placed on the council's intranet inviting views from all staff, a press release was issued, an alert was put out on Twitter and a stand

was taken at a Tenants' Open Day.

A large number of responses were received and there was very little disagreement that the three priorities were broadly correct although it became apparent that some amendment to the wording was required to encompass the wider range of issues raised. This resulted in the three priorities that have been considered in this strategy.

We then set about analysing the options for delivering those objectives. We again felt that it was important to involve stakeholders in this process so we held an Options Workshop session. This was a two-hour brainstorming session and was run three times during the day: in the morning, the afternoon and the evening. We invited all of the people and groups listed above and over the course of the day some 57 people attended to give their views. At each session attendees were split up into three separate groups, one for each priority and, facilitated by a member of staff, each group discussed their priority and generated ideas as to what the council and its partners should be doing to try to tackle the issues.



This provided us with an extensive list of comments and ideas which we used to develop a set of outline actions for each priority. These were incorporated into the strategy and approved by the council in December 2013. Further work was then done to draw up the more detailed delivery plans that are now included in this document.

The delivery plans will be monitored by the Interim Housing & Property Services Board on a quarterly basis. The strategy itself will be subject to a desktop review in twelve months' time to ensure that the priorities remain relevant and then to a full review after two years in preparation for a new strategy from 2017.

Background documents and data sources

A Shared Vision: Warwick District's Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026
Warwick District Council Strategic Housing Market Assessment (GL Hearn 2012)
Warwick District Council Local Plan Revised Development Strategy (WDC, 2013)
Warwickshire Observatory (<http://www.warwickshireobservatory.org/>)
Census 2011 (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>)
Nomis – official labour market statistics (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>)
Warwick Health Profile 2013 (Public Health England 2013)
Warwick District Council Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey (ORS 2012)
Warwick District Council Housing Business Plan 2012- 2062
Laying the foundations: a housing strategy for England (HMG 2011)
The Warwickshire Local Investment Plan (2011)
Warwickshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2012/2013
The Warwickshire Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board Interim Strategy (WCC 2013)
Warwick District Council Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015
Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Warwick District (Salford University 2012)
Warwick District Council Empty Homes Strategy 2011-2014



Further information

Further information on housing issues in WDC and further copies of this strategy can be downloaded from www.warwickdc.gov.uk

For general queries about this strategy please telephone **01926 456335** or email yourview.housing@warwickdc.gov.uk

For general housing enquiries please telephone the main council offices on 01926 410410, email contactus@warwickdc.gov.uk or write to us at:
Warwick District Council, Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, CV32 5HZ

An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy was undertaken on 9 October 2013 and will be reviewed on 9 October 2016.

Where possible, information can be made available in other formats, including large print, CD and other languages. Please call 01926 410410.