



# Northumberland

## County Council

**DRAFT**

# **HOUSING STRATEGY FOR NORTHUMBERLAND 2019-2021**

## **Foreword**

In May 2017 you gave us a clear mandate as to the Northumberland in which you want to live. Through our Corporate Plan we committed to deliver this mandate, part of which was to ensure that all of you feel safe, valued, and part of your community and live in distinctive vibrant places, which you value and in which you feel proud.

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2021 sets out our shared vision for housing, housing services across Northumberland and for the people who live here to help us deliver upon this commitment. It focuses on the priorities of the Council, working with our partners, stakeholders and our residents to enhance people's lives and invest to strengthen our communities.

The introduction of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the publication of a revised National Policy Framework by Government on 24 July 2018 which detailed the aspiration to build 300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s made widespread changes to housing policy and the planning system. Both have greatly influenced our new Housing Strategy for Northumberland, supporting our aim to deliver homes where they are most needed, for our residents who most require them.

We believe everyone has the right to live in a decent, good quality affordable home that meets their needs. The Right House in the Right Place, using sustainable methods of construction, is vitally important to people's lives. It is important for people's start in life, ongoing health and well-being, economic prosperity, security and to foster aspirations. We recognise the link between good quality housing and good health and the strategy supports healthy living through the provision of safe, warm and secure homes.

Housing underpins our vision for Northumberland to be a county which combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life – leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality where people enjoy better health throughout their lives. By working with communities to ensure that we can meet their needs with the right types of housing we will ensure that we achieve our ambition.

We have an ageing population in Northumberland and diverse rural and urban communities, each with their own pressures. Our plans need to reflect the needs and aspirations of older people whilst supporting other generations, encouraging all communities across Northumberland to thrive. We recognise that if we are to achieve our ambitions and outcomes we need the support, input and resources of a wide range of partners and we will work closely with them to achieve this.

We are up for the challenge and look forward to delivering upon our promises to support our most vulnerable residents across the county through the delivery of the right type of affordable homes in the right place.

**Cllr John Riddle**

**Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing & Resilience**

## CHAPTER 1: OUR PRIORITIES IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Housing should provide a secure foundation for our residents to live the lives they want to live. Finding the right home, in the right place, is an essential element for people seeking to support their families and sustain work.

Housing is an important asset but many families struggle to meet their housing needs. It can be challenging for households who wish to be homeowners to secure the mortgage they require. Many other households face rising rents, and a reduced choice of affordable homes to rent or buy.

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2021 outlines the Council's vision, priorities and ambitions for housing, including aspirations for housing growth, working with local communities to enable them to grow and thrive.

By enabling innovative and proactive practices the Housing Strategy will support the delivery of the Corporate Priorities;

*Having a decent roof over your head is fundamental to this health and well being. None of you should be forced to live on the streets, or in a "home" that is a health hazard or physically impedes independence... We acknowledge that this will mean increasing the supply of both affordable and specialist supported housing, including extra care housing for older people. This remains a priority for us but any new building needs to be in the right place, at the right scale and for the right end-user.*

The strategy also complements the delivery of the principles set out in the draft Northumberland Local Plan; that having a decent home is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Northumberland;

*Our strategic approach to housing provision is underpinned by the Government's NPPF<sup>1</sup> requirement to positively seek opportunities to meet our identified needs for housing, significantly boosting the supply of housing to help support wider opportunities for economic growth while enabling sufficient flexibility to quickly adapt to changes in circumstances that may occur.*

The strategy is fundamental to the delivery of Northumberland County Council's Corporate Plan, which forms the cornerstone of the Council's work by setting out its vision for the county and the priorities it will focus on in order to deliver that vision. The Council's corporate plan identifies its vision as:

**Making Northumberland a county which you regard as a great place to live, and in which you can access the things you enjoy, whilst having the opportunity to learn and thrive.**

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019

To support our residents the Corporate Plan states;

**We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone [How]**

The corporate plan requires us to be resourceful, making every pound count therefore will review the structure of both Strategic and Housing Management Services to ensure income is maximised.

**We want you to feel safe healthy & cared for [Living]**

The Council wants everyone to feel safe, valued and part of their community. Housing Services aim to support people who are vulnerable in our communities.

**We want you to love where you Live [Enjoying]**

The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents live in distinctive vibrant places, which they value and in which they feel proud.

**We want to have access to the things you need [Connecting]**

The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents can easily get to work, to learning and to the various facilities and services they might want to use.

**We want you to achieve and realise your potential [Learning]**

The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents, regardless of age and circumstances, have the right qualifications and skills to secure a good job that pays well and provides the prospect of a rewarding career.

There are substantial challenges ahead: The demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply, which needs to be met by new houses and by bringing back into use empty properties; our ageing population has significant implications for the design of new homes and the support available to help people to live independently for as long as possible; the age and quality of some of the current social housing stock means that ongoing investment is required to ensure energy efficiency; there is an increased demand on housing and housing-related support services, including those that deal with homelessness.

We can meet these challenges, with three areas defining our focus over the period of this strategy:

<b>GROWING OUR COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>SUPPORTING OUR RESIDENTS</b>
<b>IMPROVING HOMES AND COMMUNITIES</b>

## CHAPTER 2: THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The National Context is a major influence, defining how we can deliver for our residents.

**The Housing White Paper ‘Fixing our broken housing market’ 2017** was published in February 2017 setting out the Government’s intentions and how they plan to implement them through policy and legislation. [Link to document](#) The White Paper informed the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and amendments to associated supporting guidance.

The White Paper acknowledges the scale of the housing crisis facing the country and recognises that there has been insufficient increase in house building to meet the backlog of under supply and projected future need stating that, “Our broken housing market is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today. Whether buying or renting the fact is that housing is increasingly unaffordable – particularly for ordinary working class people who are struggling to get by.” **Housing White Paper “Fixing our broken housing market”**

**National Planning Policy Framework was revised** to clarify the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) to be applied in Northumberland. To help maintain housing supply, the County Council is required to maintain a 5 year supply of available housing land and to monitor progress in building out sites which have planning permission. Where the HDT indicates that delivery has fallen below 95% of the housing requirement, the council is required to prepare an action plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery. This Housing Strategy will help form the basis of delivery and action plans.

**The Autumn 2017 Budget** announced £15.3bn of new financial support for house building over the next five years. This takes the total to at least £44bn of capital funding, loans and guarantees to help build 300,000 homes annually by the mid-2020s. In Northumberland, the key will be building the homes in the right places and ensuring that local people can afford them. For many local households, social rents remain the only truly affordable option. Therefore, new funding will need to support affordable homes in a range of affordable tenures in order to be effective.

**The Welfare Reform Act 2017** introduced Universal Credit, the Spare Room Subsidy, Benefit Cap, Local Council Tax Support Scheme and replaced Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments. Northumberland County Council must work both to implement welfare benefit changes and to mitigate their effect, supporting our tenants to sustain their tenancies and avoid rent arrears.

**The Housing and Planning Act 2016** introduced a number of new housing policies including: Starter Homes, 'pay to stay', extending Right to Buy to Housing Associations, the sale of higher value local authority homes, and a new deregulated regime for social landlords. The extension of the Right to Buy to Housing Association tenants would be funded by requiring councils to sell their higher value council homes, or pay an equivalent levy to government. If implemented, this duty would likely impact on the availability of council homes within the county, placing additional pressure on Housing Register and homelessness services.

**Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** In April 2017 the Homelessness Reduction Act received Royal Assent and commenced in April 2018. The Act gives the Council new duties with a focus on prevention of homelessness and those already experiencing homelessness are able to access help regardless of whether they have a priority need.

**The Private Rented Sector** - The Housing White Paper emphasises the important role that the private rented sector has to play in the housing market. There is greater focus nationally on enabling more private rented sector accommodation to help meet housing demands. In addition to this, several elements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 involve measures to help raise standards amongst landlords and agents. This includes measures such as banning orders for rogue landlords.

**Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018** came into effect in May 2018. It contains measures to that lifetime tenants who are victims of domestic abuse retain a right to a lifetime tenancy in cases where they need to move due to abuse.

The Government's **Social Housing Green Paper** was released for consultation in August 2018 and covers the overall quality of social homes, their management, and the rights of tenants. It sets out the Government's proposals to empower social housing residents, tackle stigma, and ensure that social housing can be both a stable base that supports people when they need it and assist social mobility.

**Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018** sets out the Government's plan to eradicate rough sleeping under three key themes: Prevention; Intervention and Recovery. It identifies funding opportunities and expectation on local authorities to tackle rough sleeping.

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and Residential Property Licensing reforms** came into effect in October 2018. The reforms increased the number of properties subject to mandatory licensing. All houses regardless of size, which house

five people or more in two or more separate households now require an HMO licence.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE REGIONAL CONTEXT - FIT FOR THE FUTURE**

### **North of Tyne Combined Authority**

The North of Tyne devolution deal transfers unprecedented new powers and investment from Government to the North of Tyne. This will provide opportunities to share resources, combine skills, knowledge and expertise and deliver economies of scale.

Increasing rural productivity and scaling up the rural economy are key objectives of the North of Tyne (NoT). The delivery of affordable housing in rural areas is key to delivering these objectives.

The North of Tyne Combined Authority Housing and Land Board has been set up to oversee the delivery of new homes agreed in each of the local authority's Local Plan. The total number of new homes will remain the same as outlined in the individual Plans but the rate of delivery is proposed to increase overall from 1,800 to 3,000 per year up to 2032, helping to provide much needed homes more quickly.

The Housing and Land Board have identified rural affordable housing delivery as a key objective and will establish a model that will enable Northumberland to achieve their aim to become a centre of excellence.

Increasing rural productivity and scaling up the rural economy are key objectives of the North of Tyne Housing Deal and essential in the realisation of ambitions to see a continuation of new non traditional businesses being created through improved digital connectivity in rural areas.

Opportunities also exist to establish a vehicle that will undertake a range of activities to accelerate the delivery of affordable rural housing and become a centre of excellence. The list of activities is considered below:

### **Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal**

Northumberland County Council is part of the new approach to cross-border working between Governments, local authorities and partners. The Borderlands Partnership brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Borders and

Northumberland County Council. The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal recognises that our primary challenge is population growth, specifically the need to attract more working age people to the area to improve our productivity and to grow our economy.

### **Linking rural housing development to rural business scale up**

The North of Tyne Devolution Deal includes powers and funding that will increase the growth and productivity of rural communities and develop land for economic growth and regeneration. The delivery vehicle will need to ensure it is involved in these plans to ensure it delivers the right homes in the right areas to support business scale up.

### **Development of Rural Exception Sites.**

Rural Exception Sites help address the affordable housing needs of rural communities by enabling the release of small sites for development that would not normally be used for housing. The emerging Northumberland Local Plan supports the use of Rural Exception sites where opportunities arise and essential criteria are met.

- The Council is currently reviewing its garage sites with the aim of 'packaging' them to create larger development opportunities. It is keen to explore modern methods of construction on these sites.

### **Funding Opportunities**

There are a range of funding programmes available to support the delivery of affordable housing, mainly accessible through Homes England. Programmes include:

- Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021 still has around £1.3bn available
- Community Housing Fund - £163m
- Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund - up to £125m available to support projects in England that are outside London

The Council will continue to work with stakeholders (Registered Providers (RPs), Community Groups, etc) to harness existing and new funding opportunities.

### **Community Led Housing**

Current schemes cover a range of delivery options, including housing co-operatives, community land trusts, community interest companies, charitable trusts (including homelessness charities) and parish councils.



The Council has also worked with private landowners, encouraging them to build affordable homes on land they own where planning would not normally be granted. This has resulted in several small schemes, owned and managed by landowners, ranging from small farmers to owners of major estates, such as the Duke of Northumberland. In these circumstances the Council monitors the evidence for the setting of affordable rents and requires that tenants are selected via the Homefinder (Choice Based Letting) process to ensure transparency.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSING CONTEXT**

**Our vision is to improve access to and the supply of affordable housing by delivering the right type of homes in the right places for both existing and future communities.**

### **Housing Growth**

The draft Northumberland Local Plan sets out the level of housing growth proposed in the county over the period 2016-36. It identifies a housing minimum requirement of 17,700 net additional dwellings, equating to 885 per annum. This level of growth is significantly higher than the minimum Local Housing Need figure as identified through the Government's standard methodology. This planned level of growth is to support the economic ambitions of the Council and increase choice in the housing market. Northumberland is already successfully delivering housing, and the housing requirement should be considered in the context of more than 20,000 dwellings already committed<sup>2</sup>.

Delivering a mix of high quality housing to meet people's needs and aspirations, including affordable homes and specialist needs housing, is essential for re-balancing Northumberland's housing market and enhancing the sustainability of our communities. We need to ensure that we meet the ongoing needs of the county's increasing older proportion of our population, while also recognising that attracting high quality businesses to locate in Northumberland will require an adequate supply of good quality, medium density family housing, as well as 'executive' housing. We therefore want to ensure that new housing constructed in the county (both market and affordable housing) is broadly in accordance with the county's predominant needs, as informed by the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment analysis of current supply and likely future demands. The Northumberland SHMA Update (June 2018) provides detailed market analysis of housing needs at the county level, and across local housing market sub-areas.

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<sup>2</sup> Completions from 2016-18, together with dwellings outstanding on developments with planning permission and those minded to approve.

## **Affordable Housing and affordability**

The 2018 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update identified a need for 1,870 affordable homes overall (average 374 per annum) over the period 2018-2023. After taking into account 1,116 outstanding affordable housing commitments forecast to be delivered in this time, a residual need for 755 additional affordable homes at an annual average 151 per annum over the next 5 years is identified.

The residual need for affordable homes equates to 17% of the county's overall draft Local Plan housing requirement over the period 2018-23. In order to meet this need, taking into account the viability of doing so across Northumberland, the draft Local Plan sets affordable housing requirements for all major development proposals across the county, ranging from 10% to 30%, based on viability value areas.

The SHMA recommends that 50% of affordable homes are provided for rent, and that 50% are provided through affordable home ownership products<sup>3</sup>. In order to meet the Government's NPPF expectation that 10% of homes on major developments are available as affordable home ownership products, in the draft Local Plan, the recommended general tenure split also varies across the value areas.

Many areas of Northumberland have the growing problem of affordability, the need for housing to either rent or buy cannot be met by the current housing market.

Information from the official Office for National Statistics affordability analysis for 2017 shows that the median house price in Northumberland (£158,000) is almost six times the average salary £27,104 pa. The lower quartile house price (£105,000) compared to the lower quartile earnings (£20,265 pa) is a similar ratio at 5.18. The high ratio of house price to salary in the county means that many households cannot afford to buy their own home. As mortgage lenders typically use the criteria of 3.5 times the household income many households are priced out of the housing market and have to consider renting as an alternative, although in many areas this is not an option due to lack of affordable social housing and high private sector rental costs.

## **Housing for Older People**

The population of Northumberland at 30 June 2017 was 319,030 , an increase of 1,586 (0.5%) since mid-2016. Northumberland has an ageing population, a trend which is projected to continue in the near future<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> E.g Shared ownership, discounted market value homes, starter homes.

<sup>4</sup> 2017 Mid Year Estimates (MYE) published by ONS

- 16% (52,204) of residents are under 16
- 60% (190,567) fall into the 16-64 age bracket
- 24% (76,259) are aged 65 or over

The number of people aged 65+ is set to increase by 42.4% by 2031<sup>5</sup> This presents challenges to make sure older people are properly housed and supported.

Across our county 49.1% of the population live in rural areas compared to the North East (18.8%) and England as a whole (18.9%)<sup>6</sup>

In 2013 DEFRA published a *Rural Ageing Research Summary Report of Findings*. This highlighted key issues for older people in rural communities, many of which can also be seen in urban communities: These included

- Social isolation is a growing concern
- Poverty and deprivation is a common theme
- Older people suffer most from the loss of local services and the high cost of living
- Service providers face a difficult challenge to meet the needs of older populations as well as other vulnerable groups
- The need for increased availability of appropriate housing stock and availability of home based care, support and adaptations

In the summer of 2017, during Rural Housing Week, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People established a special Inquiry to consider recommendations for addressing the needs of older people living in rural areas. The Inquiry has concluded that the ageing population in rural areas deserves a new drive for more and better homes, preferably where older people can stay close to friends and family – and the informal networks they provide – and always where their independence can be preserved.

Housing provision that meets the needs of older people has significant benefits to their health and wellbeing while easing social care and NHS budgets. Properly adapted and energy efficient housing can reduce the need for social care and improve wellbeing. Developing sustainable homes for the future for all Northumberland residents is a key priority.

## **Northumberland County Council Housing**

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<sup>5</sup> Know Northumberland Issue 26 – Population and Health March 2018

<sup>6</sup> Know Northumberland Issue 26 – Population and Health March 2018

We are committed to the growth of our own housing stock and we will seek to facilitate up to 1,000 new homes for rent, including new Council housing over the life of this strategy to reflect identified housing need. We are passionate about supporting our residents across the county ensuring that the homes we offer are suitable, being safe warm and affordable for our tenants.

In April 2018, Northumberland County Council launched an £80m, eight-year investment plan to fund the continued improvement across its housing stock by providing a “Decent Homes Plus Standard” for tenants.

Major capital works programmes are being completed to address poorly insulated Dorran style houses, supporting the Council’s commitment to increase overall energy efficiency in homes and help address fuel poverty issues. In other more rural areas of the county air source heat pumps are being installed as an alternative to coal or electricity fuelled heating systems.

### **Council Housing Funding**

Rental income is crucial to the viability of our Business Plan however, under the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, Housing Associations and Councils have been required to reduce social housing rents by 1% pa for four years from 2016-2020. This has reduced the Council’s rental income and capacity to fund the development of new homes. The total loss in income over the four years of the rent reduction, coupled with the effects of the new Right to Buy is estimated to be £10m. Recent changes to legislation means that from 2020 this situation will be reversed and rents can again be increased at an affordable rate.

The recent Government announcement to remove the borrowing cap on Housing Revenue Accounts and limit this to prudential borrowing rules will provide a significant opportunity for Northumberland Council to undertake major capital schemes, including; development of new affordable housing, remodelling of existing housing and demolition and re-provision of housing which no longer meets the needs of our communities.

To deliver our ambition we will seek to develop an investment reserve within the housing revenue account which coupled with the removal of the borrowing cap will enable the council, working with Homes England, to maximise the availability of grant funding.

### **Community Led Housing**

Northumberland County Council was allocated £1.314m in 2017 from the Department of Communities and Local Government Community Housing Fund. The

allocation was based on the high level of second homes and holiday homes in the county and affordability levels.

This funding is used by the council to work in partnership with local communities to develop Community Led Housing (CLH). Northumberland has a particularly strong and well established community-led-housing network, which forms part of the wider independent North East Community-Led-Housing Development Network coalition of community organisations, public sector bodies, housing associations and academic institutions.

To date, there has been 10 successful applications for funding totalling almost £480k, including three applications for capital funding.

The draft Northumberland Local Plan states that community-led housing, including individual and group self-build and custom-housebuilding will be supported and facilitated, particularly where they will contribute to meeting local housing needs. Commercial house builders will also be encouraged to set aside dedicated serviced plots for self-build and custom-housebuilding within larger-scale housing sites where appropriate.

### **Rural Housing**

The provision of affordable and accessible homes in rural areas is a growing issue in the county. A lack of affordable housing can lead to rural flight, where younger and less affluent households leave rural areas because they are unable to afford to live in them. This can impact on the sustainability of rural communities which can become less diverse, increasing pressure on the viability of local services and facilities.

Northumberland has adopted a positive approach to the planning for and the delivery of affordable rural housing and is committed to address these issues through the draft Local Plan. A number of housing allocations are proposed in rural areas to boost delivery, while small scale Rural Exception sites<sup>7</sup> are supported. Rural affordable housing will be supported through the Northumberland Homefinder Common Allocation Policy by ensuring that allocations are made in line with Section 106 agreements where they are in place.

### **Second/Holiday Homes**

House prices in many rural towns and villages of the county are exacerbated by the high percentage of holiday and second homes. Identifying the scale of second and holiday homes from available data is not simple, as homes often switch between different taxing regimes, Council Tax and business rates. Council Tax data<sup>8</sup> identifies

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<sup>7</sup> Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing.

<sup>8</sup> April 2016.

that 51% of Beadnell homes are either second homes, Holy Island 40% and Bamburgh 36%.

The draft Local Plan requires all new market dwellings in parishes with a high proportion homes without a usual resident, as identified in the Census, to be occupied as a principal residence. These areas are broadly aligned with the areas identified with a high proportion of second or holiday homes through Council Tax and Business Rates data.

## **CHAPTER 5: OUR ACHIEVEMENTS**

We achieved a great deal during the period of our last Housing Strategy, helping to shape and inform the quality, quantity, and choice of housing, and providing support to residents in Northumberland. The following is a summary of achievements during the life of the previous strategy from 2013 to 2018:

### **Priority 1 - Affordable and Quality Housing**

- The Council's Housing Development programme, working in partnership with Private Registered Providers enabled the delivery of 1,405 affordable homes to rent, of which 296 are Council owned properties;
- To enable increased home ownership a total of 426 affordable homes to buy or part buy have been delivered through the use of Discounted Market Sales Units where their value is set at 70% of the open market value or Shared Ownership where the tenant buys a percentage of the property and rents the remaining percentage from a Registered Provider;
- A Section 106 template agreement has been developed that assists the delivery of affordable homes through the planning process;
- A successful bid of £1.314m to the Government's Community Housing Fund has enabled the Council to work in partnership with local communities to develop Community Led Housing Approved capital projects will deliver 6 affordable homes and there have been 7 successful revenue applications to undertake housing development feasibility work;
- A range of energy efficiency measures such as the installation of solar photovoltaic panels have been installed on the Council's houses to improve the energy efficiency of its properties. As part of this project, NCC installed solar photovoltaic panels on 706 of their domestic properties
- Developed a rent deposit guarantee scheme which has assisted 86 households into private rented accommodation that is affordable and suitable to their needs;
- The Council made successful applications to apply Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) to 13 long-term empty homes. Through this method 11 properties were brought back into occupation, the remaining 2 properties were returned to occupation without the need to make final EDMOs;
- The arms-length housing management company Homes for Northumberland was brought back into the Council bringing over 8,500 homes directly under

- the Council's control; and
- A new housing management system has been introduced which will enable Council tenants to receive a much more improved and responsive service

## **Priority 2 - Healthy People**

- A framework was developed and introduced to provide a greater range of supported accommodation for vulnerable young people, meaning that the right accommodation was sourced to meet their individual needs;
- The Council's Common Allocation Policy has been amended and updated twice to reflect changes in Government policy such as welfare reform and changes to the homelessness legislation;
- Two additional supported accommodation services have been commissioned to address the needs of our most chaotic single homeless people and for young people with low support needs;
- A total of 1379 homeless applications were processed assisting 957 homeless households to be rehoused;
- A total of 4077 households were prevented from becoming homeless through targeted prevention initiatives;
- An innovative joint scheme with the NHS in Haltwhistle to deliver 12 'extra care' apartments in Haltwhistle;
- 27 Refugee families (121 people, 48 adults, 73 children) have been supported to resettle in Northumberland;
- The Gypsy Roma Traveller Service has managed 391 Unauthorised Encampments which included a total of 2016 caravans/trailers; and
- To meet the housing needs of our GRT community the Council has created 6 new pitches between Hartford Bridge and Lyneburn Cottages sites

## **Priority 3 - Sustainable Economies and Communities**

- Through the Private Rented Property Accreditation scheme there has been 785 properties accredited, ensuring that the condition of a property meets certain standards and is a suitably managed property;
- Linking into the property accreditation scheme, a Tenant Accreditation scheme has been developed to give landlords a free reference-checking service with a view to making the tenancy more sustainable and avoiding issues of anti-social behaviour and non-payment of rent. So far there has been 65 successful applicants;
- To enable people to access affordable housing in the private rented sector a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme has been developed and assisted 86 households in to private rented accommodation and ensuring that the private rented sector remains a sustainable housing option; and
- 902 empty properties have been brought back into use through giving advice and assistance and utilising measures such a lease and repair scheme and empty homes loans;

## CHAPTER 6: OUR PRIORITIES

People's needs change throughout their lives. However the need for a safe and secure home remains constant. Some people need support. In later life, many people need help to live independently for as long as possible. The overall quality and design of homes, their warmth, and their facilities is particularly important. In some cases, a home may need to be adapted to meet someone's needs. Our priorities will enable us to deliver the homes that our residents need and aspire to, growing communities across Northumberland.

### 1. GROWING OUR COMMUNITIES

**Developing homes to meet the needs of residents and aspirations of the Council through the provision of affordable housing - *We want you to love where you live [Enjoying]***

Investing in building new homes creates and supports local jobs and businesses. Therefore the availability of the right type of housing in the right places is key.

The delivery of affordable housing is important, but the Council recognises that the delivery of all types of housing will support wider economic growth and community benefits. Government guidance states that in order to create mixed and balanced communities affordable housing should be provided on-site and integrated with the market housing wherever possible. The draft Northumberland Local Plan supports this guidance, by requiring between 10% and 30% affordable homes on all major housing development sites, and a mix of affordable homes to rent and home ownership products on-site, unless alternative off-site provision or a financial contribution in lieu is clearly justified.

The Council will seek an affordable housing contribution on all planning applications for 10 or more units or sites of 0.5 hectares or more. In the Northumberland Coastal Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the contribution is expected to be on all developments of 5 or more units. Affordable housing will be secured through Section 106 planning obligation agreements. The tenure and type of affordable homes will be informed by the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment and other evidence of need.



<b>GROWING OUR COMMUNITIES</b>	
<b>Developing new housing to meet the needs and aspirations of the county through the provision of affordable housing</b>	
What we aim to achieve	How this will be done
Additional Council houses to be built.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build up to 1,000 Council-owned properties over the period of the strategy to reflect housing need</li> <li>● Deliver through the planning process and Section 106 agreements and the acquisition of strategic sites</li> <li>● Review ways in which we can maximise the scope of the Housing Revenue Account to deliver affordable housing for rent</li> <li>● Review our assets to identify potential sites for development</li> </ul>
Enable more affordable housing through community led housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providing guidance and assistance to groups interested in bringing forward community led housing schemes, monitoring progress</li> <li>● Continue to channel the Council's CHF allocation towards the support of community housing provision and officers to facilitate this Work with Development Management to identify and encourage landowners/developers able to support provision of CLH as part of larger or individual developments</li> <li>● Work with Registered Providers to encourage and support provision of CLH as part of larger or individual developments</li> </ul>
Address housing affordability in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce a range of options to create development opportunities in rural areas</li> </ul>
Promote housing growth in rural areas and help shape provision to meet need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Publicity around the delivery of housing targeted to local councillors (County and Parish) enabling them to become 'local champions'</li> <li>● Work with major landowners to identify rural sites for development opportunities</li> <li>● Identify key issues and interventions to improve provision of older/vulnerable persons housing in rural areas</li> </ul>

## 2. SUPPORTING OUR RESIDENTS

### **Supporting vulnerable groups and providing specialist housing for older people and those with support needs - *We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for [Living]***

Northumberland has an ageing population with the number of over 65's set to increase by 42.4% by 2031<sup>9</sup> which is greater than projected for the rest of the North East at 37.2% and England as a whole 41%. This presents challenges to make sure older people are properly housed and supported.

Information taken from the Director of Public Health Annual Report (2017) states that approximately 3,000 people report that they have housing needs, and 800 wheelchair users are thought to be living in accommodation that is unsuitable to their needs. Furthermore, around 34,000 households in Northumberland have at least one family member with a physical disability; half of whom are over 65 years of age. Housing provision for an ageing population and households with disabilities and other long term conditions and ensuring affordability are key areas for the Strategy actions.

There will be a need to ensure that our own housing stock as well as homes provided by developers and Registered Providers are suitable and adaptable to changing needs as well as being affordable and in the right locations. The Council has an annual budget of £520k to carry out adaptations to Council owned homes to support our vulnerable residents and to aid more independent living. Adaptations include installing level access showers, stair lifts, ramps, through floor lifts, key safes, grab rails and occasionally extensions. This is supported by the main objectives outlined in the **Northumberland Extra Care and Support Housing Strategy (2018)**.

**Reducing and Preventing Homelessness** - The Council's **Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2019 -2021)** sets out the priorities and future actions for tackling homelessness over the next three years. Future levels of homelessness will be influenced by the wider economic and social environment and tackling these issues comes at a time when the Council is faced with making significant budget savings.

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<sup>9</sup> Know Northumberland Issue 26 – Population and Health March 2018

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018. The aim of the Act is to reform the homelessness duties placed on local authorities, placing greater focus on preventing and relieving homelessness. These new duties require a cultural change across the homelessness services which support residents to find the best solutions to prevent or resolve their homelessness.

The Council will ensure services are delivered with a renewed strategic focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, through the development of a specific strategy which identifies the resources, prevention and relief activity and the supply of settled and temporary accommodation to meet local needs.

**Gypsy Roma Travellers (GRT)** - The Council owns and manages two Gypsy and Traveller sites at Hartford Bridge and Lynemouth providing 39 pitches. In Berwick a privately owned and managed site provides a further 8 pitches however, they are solely for the use of family members. There are other smaller sites in the north and the south east of the county. Travelling Show People own and manage their own private site at Bomarsund in the south east.

The draft Local Plan commits the Council to make provision for the necessary sites and yards, and additional pitches and plots to meet the needs identified in the most up to date Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). It seeks provision in the Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth and Cramlington areas for between four and eight Gypsy and Traveller pitches on permanent transit sites, and subject to further review, up to eight permanent pitches to meet medium to long term needs. It also supports the provision of additional plots to meet the needs of Travelling Showpeople at Bomarsund. The policy includes criteria for determining applications for new or extended sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

SUPPORTING OUR RESIDENTS	
<b>Specialist housing for older people and those with support needs, and supporting vulnerable groups</b>	
What we aim to achieve	How this will be done
Enable older residents to sustain health, wellbeing and independence in high quality housing in self-contained accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensuring provision of purpose built and adapted properties on new build sites</li> <li>● Carry out review of the Council's sheltered housing schemes</li> </ul>
To develop and maintain a register of affordable, adapted and accessible properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish a database of affordable, adapted and accessible properties</li> </ul>

<p>Accommodation that supports older people and people with high care needs in suitable locations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A range of different housing options to meet the changing needs of our older population and other high care need groups, promoting disability friendly design and making best use of technology</li> </ul>
<p>Support our young people leaving care into suitable, sustainable homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working with Childrens Services develop a plan for identifying suitable accommodation ensuring a planned, co-ordinated move-on for young people leaving care</li> </ul>
<p>Consider the main causes of homelessness and identify targeted action to aid the review of the Homelessness Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review, update and then adopt a revised Homelessness Strategy</li> <li>● Develop more prevention options</li> <li>● Review temporary accommodation provision</li> </ul>
<p>Promote Safeguarding across the Housing workforce, particularly with regard to recognising the signs of Domestic Abuse, Modern Day Slavery and Sexual Exploitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure all appropriate training is delivered to staff and that the Record of Learning is completed</li> <li>● Develop effective pathways to ensure that all staff are aware of the correct routes for referrals</li> <li>● Develop a Housing Offer to support the Police Protocol when working with victims of Modern Day Slavery (MDS) or Sexual Exploitation.</li> <li>● Work in partnership with Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance to ensure that the housing offer for council tenants recognises and supports victims of Domestic Abuse</li> </ul>
<p>Support the GRT community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify appropriate sites in the right places and carry out any required remedial works</li> <li>● Develop engagement and support with GRT Communities in Hartford Bridge and Lynemouth</li> </ul>
<p>Develop services available for all Asylum Seekers and Refugees placed in Northumberland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore the development of a Volunteer Policy to support the community engagement work with Refugees and Asylum Seekers</li> <li>● Support Asylum Seekers to access to education for children and ESOL provision for adults</li> </ul>
<p>Encourage and support more households in housing need to register on Homefinder (older people, people with disabilities, people living in isolated rural areas..)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote Homefinder</li> <li>● Promote all new affordable housing developments to local communities</li> <li>● Update website, develop and implement a communication plan on housing options and opportunities</li> </ul>

### 3. IMPROVING HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

**Making better use of existing housing stock - *We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone [How]***

**Empty Homes** - Empty and derelict properties are a wasted resource that could be better used to relieve homelessness and address housing needs. Empty homes can also have a negative impact on their surrounding communities.

Consequences of long term empty properties can include attracting crime, thereby reducing the value of neighbouring properties, being an eyesore, costing time and money to local authorities and being costly for the owner to maintain. There are clear economic and social benefits in overcoming these problems by returning empty homes to occupation. To address these issues in Northumberland a number of initiatives are currently being delivered by the Private Sector Housing team with funding secured from Homes England. By 2021 a total of 35 empty properties will be brought back into use through the following schemes:

- **Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)** - Through the use of EDMO powers 30 long term empty properties will be brought back into use. The Council will then manage the property for a period of up to seven years
- **Purchase and Repair Scheme** - Under this scheme 5 properties that have been empty for more than six months will be purchased, repaired and managed by the Council.

As part of our drive to meet housing demand, achieve sustainable communities across the county and secure lifetime homes we will work to ensure the best use of existing homes across all tenures in the county.

- When appropriate we will use statutory enforcement powers to enforce the legislation to improve housing standards and ensure the health, safety and welfare of all private sector tenants
- We will promote landlord self-regulation in the private rented sector through the Northumberland County Council Property Accreditation Scheme and the Landlord Forum

The **Private Sector Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2015-2020** outlines Northumberland County Council's plans to meet people's housing needs by helping

to maintain and improve the existing private housing stock in the county, contributing to the delivery of the Council's Corporate priorities.

<b>IMPROVING HOMES AND COMMUNITIES</b>	
<b>Making Better Use of Existing Housing Stock</b>	
<b>What we aim to achieve</b>	<b>How this will be done</b>
To bring back into occupation long term empty properties, bringing the percentage down annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the EDMO process</li> <li>• Properties to be acquired through the Lease and Repair scheme in line with HCA funding requirements</li> <li>• Housing Operations Team to manage these properties</li> </ul>
Encourage a healthy private rented sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular landlord fora to provide advice and assistance to private sector landlords</li> </ul>
Encourage more landlords and letting agents to join the Property Accreditation scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revamp the current property accreditation scheme - investigate incentives</li> </ul>
Service review of Allocations Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Service review of the Common Allocation Policy to ensure that it supports the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities and partners' priorities</li> <li>• Complete service review of Void property process and procedures</li> </ul>
Maintain high standards in the Council's housing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered through a rolling programme of investment in comprehensive improvements and repairs.</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction with the quality and speed of repairs to be regularly monitored</li> </ul>
Making best use of the council's housing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising the amount of time properties are empty, so that the allocation of properties begins when a notice to quit is received from the existing tenant.</li> <li>• Consider the use of hard to let properties for temporary accommodation</li> <li>• Work with other Supported Accommodation providers to identify if any properties would be suitable for use with their clients</li> </ul>

## **CHAPTER 7: Monitoring and reporting our progress**

An Action Plan will be developed that will ensure that the Council's objectives as set out in this strategy are delivered and reported on to elected Members and to the residents of Northumberland.

The Strategic Housing team has responsibility for this Housing Strategy and will use it to plan and direct its workload. The management team will check progress against this Strategy each month and will produce regular reports to let staff and elected Members know how we are doing.

Progress against our priorities will be reported annually to elected Members and we will produce an annual report setting out our progress against this Strategy. If changes happen that significantly affect our ability to deliver our housing priorities (such as new legislation) then the Strategy will be reviewed in addition to the annual review of the plan and targets, involving any partners.

## **CHAPTER 8: Equality and Diversity Statement**

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019– 2021 outlines Northumberland County Council's approach to our statutory duty to identify and meet housing need.

The strategy outlines the interventions that support some protected groups who may be disadvantaged when accessing housing.

The strategy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on any of the nine protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Sex
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion and belief
- Marriage and civil partnership

Housing Services also have a direct impact on the different protected characteristics of the equalities legislation. Some protected groups are disproportionately characterised by economic disadvantage and therefore also at a disadvantage when accessing the housing market on which most people rely. Any action to complement and to improve the affordability of housing construction, distribution and maintenance will therefore directly address inequality for all the "strands"

Further information regarding Equality and Diversity can be found on the Northumberland County Council website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

### **Associated documents**

Corporate Plan 2018-2021

Northumberland Local Plan Publication Draft Plan (Regulation 19) (January 2019)

Northumberland Extra Care and Supported Housing Strategy 2018

Northumberland Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2015

## **Appendix 1**

### **Key County Information from the Evidence Base**

#### **The People**

- The population of Northumberland at 30 June 2017 was 319,030 , an increase of 1,586 (0.5%) since mid-2016;
- Northumberland's population of those over 65 years of age is projected to increase by almost half between 2016 and 2036 with those over 80 years of age doubling in number;
- The percentage of older residents is increasing each year and the percentage figure for this age group is higher than both the North East and England as a whole; and
- The core working age population of 20 to 64 year olds is projected to decrease by over 12%

#### **Housing in Northumberland**

- There are 8,480 Council houses in Northumberland;
- 17,720 Private Registered Provider homes;
- 127,430 private sector homes; and
- There are currently 9,186 households registered on Northumberland Homefinder 3,758 are deemed to have some degree of housing need

#### **Cost of housing in Northumberland**

- The average (median) house price in Northumberland (£153,871) is less than England (£243,582) but considerably more than the North East (£130,838).

**Source: ONS, end Dec 17**



## Deprivation

- 13.2% of the population live in one of the 10% most deprived areas of England compared to 16.98% in the North East and 9.9% across England (2015);
- 20.8% of the population are classed as income deprived and 25.4% are employment deprived. (2015 IMD)

## Health

- The health of people in Northumberland is varied compared with the England average. Deprivation is lower than average, however about 17.6% (9,300) children live in poverty.
- Life expectancy for women is lower than the England average. <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Northumberland Health Profile 2015