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# **A Housing Strategy for Mid Devon 2021-2025**





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# Foreword

## Our vision for Mid Devon

Our vision is to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our residents through a greater choice of high-quality new and adapted homes. This will help us to support the social wellbeing needs of everyone who lives in Mid Devon and provide high quality growth in a high quality environment.

Having a good home is vitally important. It is important for our health, education, feeling of security and of course our economic well-being. It can give the best start in life to our children and the best care and support required in our later years. Housing encompasses every aspect and all stages of our life. It is the foundation upon which people can build happy and successful lives, allowing communities to thrive. Such communities not only serve current residents but encourage those seeking positive change, helping to build multi-skilled and multi-cultural societies.

New housing and a greater choice of housing is also a key part of our economic transformation strategy. The right mix of good quality housing of all types, sizes and tenures will underpin our skills offer to new business investment by meeting the needs of our current and future residents. It is important that we support housing growth to meet a growing population and to support economic growth but this cannot be achieved solely by developing new homes but also by focusing on our existing stock and making better use of it for everyone, including our vulnerable households.

We know that achieving our vision will not be easy in these times of constant change and with fewer resources but it is important that we are ambitious and innovative in realising our vision and continue to improve the excellent housing services we have in Mid Devon. Partnership working will be key to this. The economy will continue to change and new housing policy will emerge through the life of this strategy. We need to make sure we are prepared for these changes and can adapt to meet local housing need.

With our partners we will work hard to bring to reality our vision and the priorities within this strategy.



**Cllr. Bob Evans**

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services

# Introduction

## Strategic context

The Housing Strategy for Mid Devon does not stand alone and most of the priorities and actions within it operate alongside existing strategies, delivery plans and policies. In particular it is guided by policies and priorities outlined in the Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 and the Corporate Plan 2020-24.

This strategy has also been developed in the context of the role of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership which aims to boost the regional economy across the Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay region with high living standards and outstanding quality of life.

It is important that Mid Devon continues to contribute towards regional ambitions for growth by continuing to work with other Local Authorities and regional partners. From a national perspective, in recent years the Government has introduced a raft of new legislation to stimulate and speed up housing supply across all forms of tenure and to reform the welfare system. Most recently, in November 2020 we saw the publication of the Government's Social Housing White Paper which will place new responsibilities on us as a Social Landlord and direct provider of social housing.

There is an agreement from all major political parties nationally that housing is a top national priority. That presents an opportunity for local authorities and their partners to deliver effective leadership that brings together communities, housing, town and country planning together with public health and social care. This strategy is looking to provide a combined commitment within these complex strands for the benefit of our residents, building upon and developing a number of informal and formal partnerships we already have in place. A strong corporate commitment and effective leadership features strongly in this Strategy. We hope that the delivery of the strategy will be a catalyst for innovation, positive change and a more sustainable housing landscape that puts residents and communities at the heart of what we are trying to do.

We have taken these changes, opportunities and strategic direction of travel into account within the development of this strategy. It is also important that we are responsive to further legislative changes as they emerge and shape these policies to meet the needs of our local housing market. This strategy sets out Mid Devon District Council's considered housing plans and actions for the period 2021-2025 taking into account the national, regional and local context set out below.

### National Context

- Housing Acts 1985, 1988 and 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- Laying The Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011
- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- National Planning Policy Framework 2020
- Care Act 2014
- English Housing Survey 2015-2016
- The Charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper 2020

### Regional Context

- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership 'Blueprint for Clean Growth' 2021
- Devon County Council/NHS Devon CCG Housing and Accommodation Strategy - Healthy Lives, Vibrant Communities and Housing Choices 2020-2025
- Exeter City Council Housing Strategy 2016-2020
- East Devon Housing Strategy 2017
- Somerset Housing Strategy 2019-2023

### Local Context

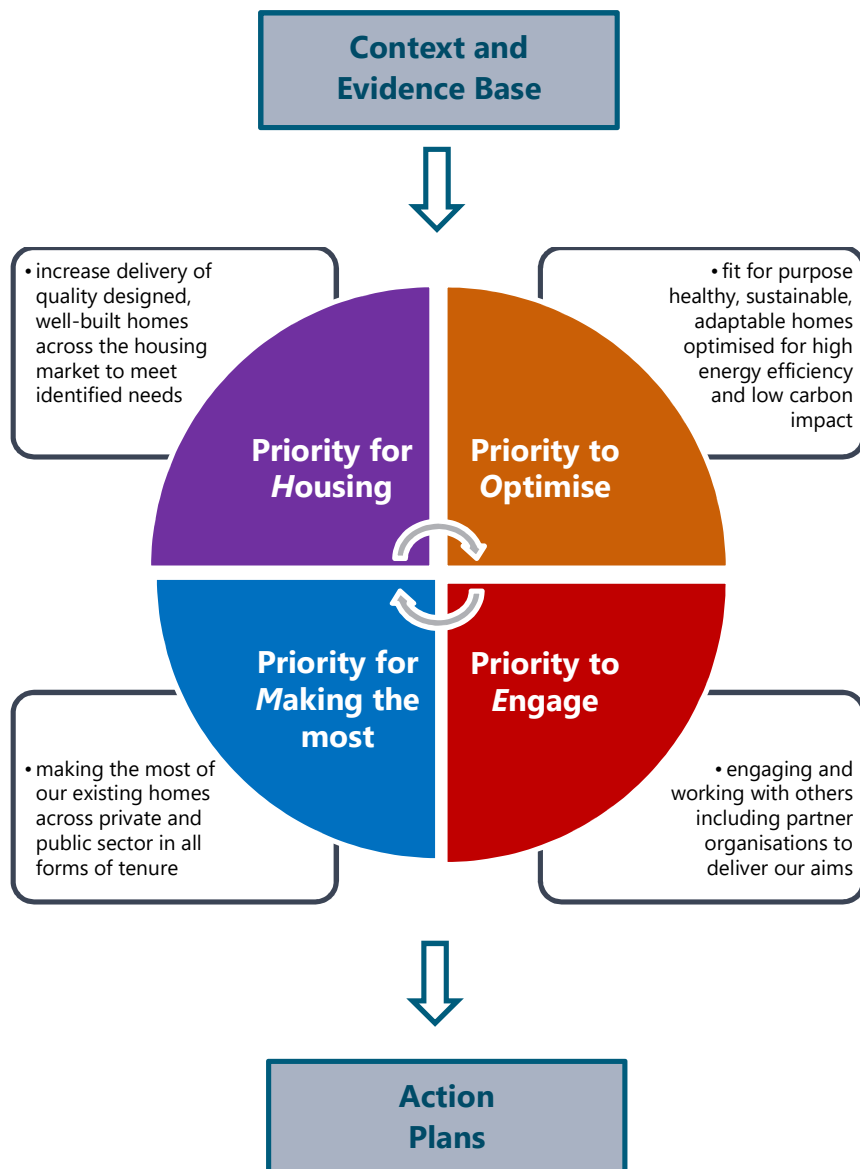
- Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033
- Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (in development)
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Corporate Plan 2020-24
- Housing Assistance Policy 2019
- Homeless Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025
- Housing Strategy 2015-2020
- Enforcement Policy 2020
- Tenant Census Report 2020

## A Housing Strategy for Mid Devon District Council 2021 – 25

In recognising the national, regional and local context for this strategy the following priorities (HOME) have been developed. These also take account of the supporting evidence and documents that underpin this context.

All priorities have equal status and are interdependent. One cannot be delivered without the other.

### Housing Strategy for Mid Devon 2021 - 2025





## **We are Mid Devon**

Mid Devon is a fantastic place to live, work, study and visit. As a rural district we cover an area of 353 square miles (914 km<sup>2</sup>) in the beautiful agricultural heartland of Devon, between Dartmoor, Exmoor and the Blackdown Hills.

More than half the population of some 82,000 people is scattered in villages in the rural hinterland, with the balance divided between the three main towns of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton.

While it is the 23rd-largest district council in England by area, it is also the 34th-smallest by population. We lie to the north of the city of Exeter, one of the most rapidly expanding economies in the country, and as a district council Mid Devon has sought to maximise this opportunity by delivering quality growth in a high-quality environment.

Mid Devon District Council is a progressive council committed to providing high quality and sustainable services, creating an environment where communities and businesses can flourish and grow together. Our forward looking Local Plan is recently adopted and our Council Housing, Homelessness and Private Sector Housing services are all held in high regard.

## **Key achievements**

This strategy builds upon our previous housing strategy in which we have made significant progress in addressing our key housing issues. The following are some of the key achievements since 2015:

- Directly provided over 40 new social rent homes to our stock of Council Housing
- The opening of our new, award nominated Turner Rise scheme of 26 properties in Tiverton (2020 South West LABC Building Excellence Award in the Best New Small Social or Affordable Housing Development category)
- Developed an ambitious new build programme for social rent and affordable housing for our Council Housing stock
- Currently commissioning a major new scheme for 70 new affordable homes at Post Hill Tiverton which will also be part of our Council Housing stock
- Also as a further part of our Council Housing stock, we have commissioned innovative zero-carbon modular 'Zed Pods' social rent schemes in Cullompton and Tiverton for completion this year; one of the first such social housing schemes nationally
- Successful national Culm Garden Village expression of interest has led to a long-term plan to deliver up to 5,000 sustainable new homes alongside key facilities, infrastructure and a country park
- The planning system has been used effectively with an additional 418 affordable homes, delivered through planning obligations



- Have given planning permission to over 4 self-build plots since the adoption of the Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 and the introduction of a policy for custom and self-build.
- Received a Community-Led Housing Fund grant of over £131,000 ring-fenced for the delivery Community Led Housing
- Brought over 500 empty homes back into use
- Undertaken joint working with Wessex Community Housing to support Community Land Trusts over 4 years and have a Community Housing Fund project group in place to support more community led housing schemes
- We have assisted more than 290 disabled residents to continue to live in their own homes with Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- Completed 20 Eco-flex grants to deliver energy efficiency and affordable warmth improvements to these residential properties
- We have responded to over 300 housing complaints, of which 140 included the most serious Category 1 Hazards
- Inspected 120 properties as potential Houses in Multiple Occupation and licensed 19
- We have met Decent Homes Standard across our entire Council Housing Stock (around 3,000 homes)
- Fully refurbished Ivor Macey House as a specialist temporary accommodation unit
- We conducted a review and produced a new Homeless Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025
- Provided hundreds of 'Lifeline' community alarms to help households to continue living independently in their own homes.

## Challenges

We recognise that there are still significant challenges to address, as a rural county we have a very low population density of 0.9 people per hectare (compared to England average of 4.1) with a higher dispersed, ageing housing stock.

Pockets of social isolation exist in many communities, often related to age, poverty, slow broadband speeds and lack of transport.

Our average income remains below the national average with a relatively low-pay economy but local house prices continuing to remain too high for many on low to medium incomes to afford.

Projections indicate that the biggest rise in future population growth will occur amongst older people. We need to plan to meet these changing needs and ensure that older people get the housing and support that they need. People are living longer but more of our lives are spent in ill health or disability.

We also have an in migration of 40+ year olds seeking lifestyle change, using capital asset of homes in higher house price areas to outbid / out compete local people and out migration of younger people for education and work

Housing supply remains an issue, especially for one-bedroom properties due to increase of single-person households, especially older persons and the single under 35s. We also have a shortage of larger, family properties with 3+ bedrooms.

The Council has also declared a Climate Emergency and all new policy and strategy documents will need to be set against our low carbon and other environmental priorities. We are working with all Devon local authorities to a County wide target of 2050, but will aim for Mid Devon District Council to achieve Net Zero by a more ambitious date of 2030, and also supporting our communities to reach Net Zero.

### **Purpose of the strategy**

Our Housing Strategy sets out a clear direction, for the next five years, to offer more housing with more choice by developing new homes and improving existing homes and communities. There is a particular focus on affordable and social rent properties alongside a strong commitment to having low-carbon, accessible and adaptable homes. This means we can support our most vulnerable residents to access and maintain good quality housing which meets their needs. This will help our hamlets, villages and towns to be sustainable in the longer term and contribute to the district's prosperity and wellbeing.

The strategy is divided into four chapters which expand upon each of our key housing priorities. All priorities have equal weighting; each impacts on the other and much of the work around these priorities will necessarily be overlapping and interdependent.

The Council cannot achieve this alone which we recognise by making engagement and working with others one of our priorities. This strategy can only be achieved by working closely with partners, residents and communities as shared resources and innovative partnerships and solutions are the best way forward to meet future challenges.

Ultimately, this strategy is a framework; setting direction for each of our partners and stakeholders involved in housing; residents, ward members, housing associations, developers, government bodies, regulators, investors, private landlords, charities, voluntary groups and the Council – to provide the right type of homes that are needed. This in turn provides the foundation for our residents to reach their potential and for our communities to thrive.

## Development of the strategy and consultation

The development of this strategy was led by a Strategy working group with a wide range of key internal stakeholders and contributors.

### ***Project Board***

Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services  
Director of Business Improvement and Operations  
Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

### ***Project Lead and Manager***

Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

### ***Project Team***

Forward Planning Team Leader  
Principal Housing Enabling and Forward Planning Officer  
Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure & Climate Change  
Operations Manager for Public Health and Housing Options  
Operations Manager for Housing  
Operations Manager for Building Services  
Climate and Sustainability Specialist

Prior to wider, public and external stakeholder consultation on this strategy, internal consultation on a draft strategy was undertaken with all operational service leads, Legal Services and Leadership Team at the Council before consideration by the Council's member Housing Policy Development Group and Cabinet.

In addition to indirect public consultation, a targeted consultation on the final draft Strategy was carried out with the following organisations:

- Exeter City Council, East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils (Exeter Strategic Housing Market Area)
- North Devon and Somerset West and Taunton Councils (neighbouring Local Authorities)
- Devon County Council
- Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT)
- Devon Rural Housing Partnership
- Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership
- Devon Home Choice
- Registered Providers (Housing Associations)
- Mid Devon Gypsy and Traveller Forum
- Town and Parish Councils
- Lendology Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Navigate Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Strategic Housing Priority 1: Housing - increase delivery of quality designed, well-built homes across the housing market to meet identified needs**

There are 19 objectives within this strategic priority:

### ***Maintaining a supply of new homes and sustainability***

Objective 1 - Maintain the supply of new homes in Mid Devon

### ***Meeting all housing needs of all types and tenures and type***

Objective 2 - Focus the delivery of new homes in sustainable places

Objective 3 - Secure more affordable housing

Objective 4 – First Homes

Objective 5 - Retain a viable Council Housing stock baseline of a minimum 3,000 properties through full use of available 1-4-1 receipts

Objective 6 – Grow the Mid Devon Council Housing stock beyond baseline through additional mechanisms

### ***Meeting housing needs of rural communities***

Objective 7 – Understand housing need in rural areas

Objective 8 - Support community led housing schemes

### ***Raising building design standards – accessibility, design quality and climate change***

Objective 9 – Improve accessibility standards in new homes

Objective 10 – Improve design quality in new homes

Objective 11 – Improve the climate change sustainability and resilience of new Council Housing

### ***Preventing homelessness and supporting priority households***

Objective 12 – Minimising rough sleeping

Objective 13 – Maximising prevention activities and outcomes

Objective 14 – Increasing accommodation options

Objective 15 – Improving health and wellbeing by supporting those with complex needs

### ***Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople provision***

Objective 16 – Meet the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers

### ***Modern methods of construction***

Objective 17 – Pilot modern methods of construction (MMC)

### ***Custom and Self-Build***

Objective 18 - Facilitate the delivery of serviced plots for custom and self-build housing

Objective 19 - Support custom and self-build

## 1.0 Housing

### *Maintaining a supply of new homes*

- 1.1 The Council has a key role in the delivery of new homes in Mid Devon, both as the Local Planning Authority facilitating new homes through the planning process and as a Housing Authority responsible for providing and maintaining a retained stock of council houses.
- 1.2 The Mid Devon Local Plan Review was adopted on 29th July 2020. This sets a target for the delivery of 393 new homes across the district (excluding the part within the Dartmoor National Park) each year in the period to 2033. The target has been informed through a technical assessment of housing need completed in 2015, known as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) or Local Housing Assessment (LHNA) and a study which identified further new homes needed as a result of jobs created through major tourism, leisure and shopping development proposed at Junction 27. The Local Plan includes provision for delivering 393 new homes each year on sites that are allocated for development at the three main towns and some of the identified villages, and also through development on windfall sites.
- 1.3 The annual target of a minimum of 393 new homes delivered each year is used to inform an assessment of whether a 5 year supply of deliverable sites for housing has been met in the district. This target will be reviewed through the preparation of a new local plan for Mid Devon, informed principally through a new Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA).

### **Objective 1 – Maintain the supply of new market homes in Mid Devon**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Number of net additional homes each year</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>393</b>                                      |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Local Plan / Mid Devon KPI 28</b>  |

- 1.3 The preparation of the Mid Devon Local Plan has been guided by national planning policy and sets out a vision, a spatial strategy and strategic and non-strategic policies for guiding where development can place and which parts of the district will be protected.
- 1.4 At the core of the Local Plan vision is achieving sustainable development where providing for the development needs of the current generation does not worsen the lives of future generations. In essence this can be achieved through meeting objectively assessed needs and guiding development to locations that are or which can be made sustainable through achieving a suitable balance of housing, employment, facilities and other uses; reducing the need to travel by car and increasing the potential for

walking, cycling and public transport; reducing carbon emissions; and promote social inclusion and reduce inequalities.

- 1.6 To achieve sustainable development the spatial strategy of the Local Plan identifies Cullompton as the strategic focus of new development, Tiverton and Crediton as secondary focus of new development, and more modest growth at villages. Local Plan Policy S2 and table 5 set out the amount (minimum dwellings) and distribution of development across the district as follows: Tiverton (2,358 (30%)), Cullompton (3,930 (50%)), Crediton (786 (10%)) and Rural (786 (10%)). Monitoring development at the three main towns, villages and elsewhere in the district can help measure how sustainable development is being achieved.
- 1.7 Sustainable development can mean many things but will include locating development in the right places; good access to public transport and opportunities to travel by active and sustainable modes, existing infrastructure including amenity space and access to shops, leisure and medical services. This is consistent with promoting community well-being and further driven by a need to reduce carbon and local pollution emissions and Government policies to cease production of internal combustion engine cars by 2030.

## **Objective 2 – Focus the delivery of new homes in sustainable places**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor the amount and distribution of new housing against strategic targets</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Tiverton (30%), Cullompton (50%), Crediton (10%) and rural (10%)</b>             |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Local Plan</b>   |

### ***Meeting all housing needs of all types and tenures and type***

- 1.8 National planning policy makes clear that policies in local plans should reflect the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community. This can include those who require affordable housing, travellers and people wishing to commission or build their own homes, which are the focus of this housing strategy.
- 1.9 Many households are unable to afford to buy or rent a home on the open market that meets their housing needs. Mid Devon is characterised by low wages, house prices kept high through second home ownership, a restricted supply of new homes and lack of choice. Additionally the district can be a popular retirement destination with further inward migration from towns and cities for remote working reasons due to the Covid pandemic which can place pressure on the local property market.

- 1.10 The planning process can provide a means to secure the delivery of affordable housing through new development which is kept affordable in perpetuity. This can include requiring a proportion of the new homes to be affordable on site allocations in the Local plan and in development above a threshold, and also a policy regime for affordable housing on exceptions sites at identified settlements in rural areas where planning permission would not be granted for market housing. The Council also has a retained stock of housing which is made available to rent.
- 1.11 Not all affordable homes are of the same affordability and there is a need for a mix of types of provision (e.g. number of bedrooms / size and tenure arrangement) to help best meet all levels of need and household incomes.
- 1.12 The Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 includes a priority to deliver more affordable housing and greater numbers of social rented homes in the district and will look for opportunities to assist such schemes. However, it is recognised that social rented schemes can require a greater level of public subsidy or grant support to make them viable, than other forms of rented affordable housing.
- 1.13 The Local Plan identifies a target of 124 affordable homes to be completed each year to meet needs arising in the district. However, the ability to achieve this through securing affordable housing on development sites will be subject to those developments being viable and which could be affected where there may be a requirement for development also to meet other obligations. These could include the provision of infrastructure, open space and financial contributions towards the measures for the improvement of air quality. Where planning permission is sought for new housing it will be up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment which will be scrutinised by the Council. In recognition of the need to take viability into consideration a lower target of 94 new affordable homes each year is included in this strategy.
- 1.14 It is important to define the difference between affordable homes (those let at an affordable rent) and social rent homes.

### Social Rent

Homes let at below market rent by a registered provider. The rent level is calculated on a legal basis according to a formula based on property values and local earnings (target rent). This is set out in the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard. Typically these rents are around 50% of the local market rate.



## Affordable Rent

Homes let at below market rent by a registered provider. The rent (including service charge) is set at up to 80% of the local market rent for an equivalent home.

### **Objective 3 – Secure more affordable housing**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor the number of affordable homes delivered</b>       |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>94 new affordable homes each year</b>                      |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024/Mid Devon Local Plan KPI 29</b> |

1.15 The Government has also recently introduced a new First Homes scheme which is open to first-time buyers. It is a specific kind of discounted market sale housing which meets the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. Specifically, First Homes are discounted market sale units which:

- a) must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value;
- b) are sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria;
- c) on their first sale, will have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure this discount (as a percentage of current market value) and certain other restrictions are passed on at each subsequent title transfer; and,
- d) after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000

As the Government's preferred discounted market tenure, the policy sets out that a minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes. Of the remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions, local authorities should prioritise their policy requirements on social rent. This scheme also allows local authorities to adopt additional local eligibility criteria which defines local connections and eligible key workers set out in policy. Local authorities can also require a higher minimum discount of either 40% or 50% as part of the plan-making process, subject to evidence of need and viability. We therefore have a further objective specifically to develop our approach to the delivery of First Homes.

### **Objective 4 – First Homes**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>First Homes Policy including local eligibility criteria developed and adopted</b>                                       |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Interim policy guidance brought into use 2021. Formal policy to be included in a new Local Plan (adoption mid 2025)</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Living Homes scheme June 2021</b>   |

Objective 4 is supported by Objective 30 in Chapter Three (Key workers).

1.16 Not all affordable homes and most social rent homes will be provided through the planning process. The Council is also the strategic housing authority and a registered provider of social housing. This means we can deliver social rent and affordable rent housing directly into our Council housing stock to be provided and managed directly by us.

1.17 There are several mechanisms whereby we can deliver new social rent homes:

The primary mechanism is:

Utilisation of Right to Buy (RTB) receipts from the sale of existing homes in conjunction with additional capital funding provided through our Housing Revenue Account and public sector borrowing.

These RTB funds are capped to limit how much can be used to contribute to the overall cost of each new home and therefore are largely used on a one-for-one (or 1-4-1) replacement basis though we aim to do slightly better than this in order to maintain a critical mass in housing stock and a sustainable Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

We cannot combine different mechanisms, so separately from the use of RTB (1-4-1) receipts, other key additional potential delivery routes for new Council Housing are:

Planning process and planning obligations as set out under Objective 3 where the Council becomes the affordable home owner and manages this within our HRA

Homes England Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26. This provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing. Under this programme the grant requested cannot be higher than it would be for Affordable Rent which means if we wished to provide Social Rent properties then the Council will have to bridge the gap

Other ad-hoc schemes may also support part of the cost of building new Council houses, for example contribution to brownfield development or carbon reduction costs

1.18 The Council has recently published a 5-year build programme which sets out how it proposes to use known and anticipated 1-4-1 receipts from the sale of existing Council house under Right to Buy Provisions (RTB). This programme was developed and updated in light of the recent revisions to the use of 1-4-1 RTB receipts by the Government.

This now allows us to utilise receipts over a 5-year period (up from 3-years) with pooling available over a yearly period (up from quarterly) and increasing the cap on the cost of a replacement home that can be met from RTB receipts to 40% (up from 30%).

- 1.19 As a registered Social Housing Provider we are responsible for maintaining a sustainable HRA over a rolling 30-year period. This means we are able to maintain, refurbish and replace our existing stock and related infrastructure and replace houses lost to RTB. As a result we must undertake prudent borrowing decisions against the overall HRA and its liabilities in order to bridge the remaining 60% gap in the cost of a replacement home. This may also limit our overall ability to borrow responsibly in order to bridge any other gap in funding for social housing delivered through any of the additional mechanisms outlined above.
- 1.20 How and where we procure and deliver new Council Housing can be done in several ways and the benefits of each will be weighed up and assessed on a business case basis for each site. Options include:
- Open market tender where the Principal Contractor could either be a third-party commercial developer, the Councils own development company (3 Rivers), another local authority development company or a partnership approach
  - Direct award to a Principal Contractor through a relevant procurement framework – in particular this may be used for modular build projects
  - Direct award to a 'Teckal' company set up by the Council or another contracting authority. Such a company benefits from contracts for works, services or supply from its controlling Contracting Authority (or Authorities) without having to go through a competitive tender process.
  - Direct delivery through the Council's own building services team within its One Housing service – in particular this may be appropriate for smaller schemes

The types of schemes vary, for example:

- Brownfield or greenfield developments on market or HRA/Council own land. Examples of the latter include redundant garage plots and infill sites within the control of the Council
- Infill, remodelling, acquisitions including buy back properties, modular schemes, minor and major schemes

**Objective 5 – Retain a viable Council Housing stock baseline of a minimum 3,000 properties through full use of available Right to Buy (RTB) 1-4-1 receipts**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor the number of social rent delivered for the Mid Devon Housing Revenue Account/Council Housing stock</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Deliver 60 new Council homes between 21- 25 and a further 20 by 2027</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>5-year 1-4-1 programme 2021-25, Corporate Plan 2020 – 24</b>  |

**Objective 6 – Grow the Mid Devon Council Housing stock beyond baseline through additional, non 1-4-1 mechanisms.**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Target -</b> | <b>Deliver 70 new Council homes between 21 – 23 and additional 15 homes per annum thereafter to 2025</b>   |
|                 | <b>How measured – Monitor the number of social rent and affordable homes delivered for the Mid Devon Housing Revenue Account/Council Housing stock</b> |
| <b>Source -</b> | <b>Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</b>  |

Objective 5 is additional homes specifically provided for the Mid Devon Council stock and not counted in Objective 3, which will be properties owned/managed by private, profit or not-for-profit housing associations and other registered providers but otherwise may still be available through the Devon Home Choice allocations process.

**Overall, objectives 5 and 6 aim to provide 160 new Council houses by 2025 of a mix of social and affordable rent.**

***Meeting housing needs of rural communities***

1.21 While the substantial proportion of earmarked housing development is focused at the three main towns of Tiverton, Crediton and Cullompton, the district is predominantly rural, with a population scattered across a large number of villages. The continued vibrancy of the rural areas is very much linked to the ability of those villages to provide a source of housing and local employment, shops and community facilities as a hub for social activity. Local Plan policies provide an opportunity for some limited development at identified villages across the district meeting local needs appropriate to their individual opportunities. This includes the allocation of some sites for housing and also providing scope for new homes on 'exceptions sites' within or adjoining village boundaries. The Local Plan also provides scope for some forms of development outside villages in the countryside, including affordable and low cost housing to meet local needs, gypsy and traveller accommodation, residential conversion of appropriate existing buildings, replacement dwellings, housing to accommodate a rural

worker and accommodation ancillary to a dwelling. However, new isolated homes will be avoided in the countryside. The preparation of a new Local Plan for Mid Devon will provide an opportunity to re-appraise the role of villages and functional relationships between them and the rural areas in which they are located through the gathering of new evidence.

- 1.22 While the preparation of a Local Housing Needs Assessment (formerly 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment') will look in detail at housing need across the district there is a continued opportunity for surveys of housing need to be undertaken at parish level. These can be carried out by the Devon Rural Housing Partnership and supported through funding from the Council in locations where there may be potential for rural housing schemes through policies in the Local Plan. The parish surveys of housing need can help inform the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and community led housing schemes.

### **Objective 7 – Understand housing need in rural areas**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Parish surveys of local housing need</b>                         |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>3 surveys each year</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Partnership working with the Devon Rural Housing Partnership</b> |

- 1.23 Community led housing schemes can play an important role in bringing forward sites to provide affordable new homes for local people, where those sites may typically be small, have specific delivery issues and be of no interest to developers. They can be instrumental in helping to empower local communities to shape their area and for people to continue to live where otherwise they may be forced to move away because of a lack of affordable housing opportunities. Community led housing schemes can be a means to secure properties that will continue to remain affordable in perpetuity through the use of S106 legal planning agreements. Such schemes can bring a number of other benefits, including support for smaller-scale building companies and local suppliers, providing an opportunity to raise design standards, energy efficiency and opportunities for modern methods of construction and for people to be directly involved in the building or commissioning the building of their own home.

- 1.24 In addition to on-line sources of information (for example, <https://www.communityledhomes.org.uk/community-led-housing-toolkit>) Community groups can seek support from the Council, which can include:

- Land use planning and other technical advice
- Potential financial support through the Community Led Housing Fund and the Section 106 affordable housing funds

- The Devon Rural Housing Partnership, which is a partnership of Local Authorities and Housing Associations and which commissions Devon Communities Together (experts in rural housing enabling).
- 1.25 In 2016 the Council was awarded a £131,359 through the Government's Community Housing Fund, which is ring-fenced to help support local communities with housing projects across the district. This can be achieved through working in partnership with community groups (including Community Land Trusts), registered providers, landowners and other stakeholders
- 1.26 There is currently one 'live' community led housing schemes in Mid Devon at Chawleigh. The recent appointment of a Housing Enabling officer will build capacity for the Council to provide increased support to communities wishing to bring forward housing schemes in their areas.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Objective 8 -</b>  | <b>Support community led housing schemes</b>   |
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Assist Community Land Trust through the Community Led Housing Fund</b>                                |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>1 Community Land Trust provided grant funding each year, subject to assessment criteria being met</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 / Mid Devon KPI 26</b>   |

### ***Raising building design standards – accessibility, design quality and climate change***

- 1.27 National planning policy makes clear that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, and creates better places in which to live and work. The Local Plan policies S1 and DM1 set out the Council's policies for achieving good design in the district and these are supported through the Mid Devon Design Guide that was adopted by the Council in October 2020.
- 1.28 The Mid Devon Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) outlines that the proportion of people aged over 60 is likely to increase significantly over the next 20 years. The District's aging population will give rise to the need for proposals for elderly person's accommodation including sheltered accommodation, care homes and nursing homes. Indeed, the projected growth of the 65+ population in Mid Devon between 2013 and 2033 is expected to increase by +54.3%. This equates to approximately 9,366 more people aged 65+ by 2033. Mid Devon is projected to have the highest increase in older people in the Exeter Housing Market Area, with a 54.3% increase in the population aged 65+ between 2012-33 (the average across Exeter HMA authorities being +44.4%) and an 81.8% increase in people aged 75+ over the plan period.

- 1.29 In general terms, care and support needs increase with age. However, more people are staying in their properties longer with support and care being supplied by external agents in their home. The latest census (March 2011) indicated that approximately 7% (5,792) of Mid Devon's population (77,750) were limited a lot in their day to day activities and 10% (7,708) were limited a little in their day to day activities due to a long term health problem or disability. Furthermore, data from the Council's 'Authority's Monitoring Report' (2018) highlights that approximately 20.3% of households in Mid Devon include a member with a disability and only 9.7% of the housing stock is comprised of adapted households.
- 1.30 Given that future demographic changes will inevitably result in greater demands for housing suitable for older people and those with disabilities, there is a clear need to improve accessibility standards in new homes. This is required through Local Plan Policy DM1 criterion (i) which stipulates that on sites of 10 dwellings or more the provision of 20% of dwellings built to Level 2 of Building Regulations Part M (access to and use of new dwellings). As the Government's Future Homes standard is brought into force the Council through its Local Authority Building Control Service will implement part L of the Building Regulations to achieve relevant energy performance in new development and any revision to the standards towards zero-carbon.

### **Objective 9 – Improve accessibility standards in new homes**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor annual completions on major sites (10 or more dwellings) to be built to Level 2 of Building Regulations Part M (access to and use of new dwellings)</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>20%</b>   |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Local Plan</b>  |

### **Objective 10 – Improve design quality in new homes**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor number of appeals allowed where planning permission has been refused due to poor quality design</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>0</b>   |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Local Plan / Design Guide</b>   |

- 1.31 The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. We have agreed to work to the Devon-wide target of 2050, but will aim for Mid Devon to become carbon neutral by a more ambitious date of 2030. This means we must consider the sustainability of all new homes we directly deliver – both through climate impact and their resilience to climate change.



## **Objective 11 – Improve the climate change sustainability and resilience of new Council Housing**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor % of properties that meet defined zero-carbon and other standards (e.g. Passivhaus)</b>                          |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>100% of all new build Council homes to be net-carbon zero by 2025 and meet a defined comfort and energy use standard</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Climate Strategy and Action Plan</b>   |

### ***Preventing homelessness and supporting priority households***

- 1.32 The Council has an adopted homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy for the period 2020-2025. This can be view in full here:  
<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-strategy/>
- 1.33 The Covid pandemic has brought about a major change to the way in which our Housing Options team manages approaches by those who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, and the increased demand on our service.
- 1.34 At the time of developing this Housing Strategy, the full economic impact of the pandemic is yet to be felt. However, it is widely anticipated that there will be a further increase in numbers of people approaching local authorities for assistance due to potential or actual homelessness. This may be due to employment issues arising once the furlough scheme ends when householders can no longer afford their mortgage or rental costs; or other reasons including the loss of homes in the private sector where landlords can no longer afford to service their buy to let mortgages or need to repossess their property for their own personal use.
- 1.35 The Government have also introduced various regulations to limit evictions during the pandemic but as this has eased then this may add further pressures on our service.
- 1.36 To respond to this, we have focused on delivering the four strategic aims of our homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy:
- Minimising rough sleeping
  - Maximising prevention activities and outcomes
  - Increasing accommodation options
  - Improving health and wellbeing by supporting those with complex needs
- 1.37 During the pandemic, particular focus has been on tackling rough sleeping and increasing accommodation options with a specific emphasis on effectively utilising

central Government funding (from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – MHCLG), including our successful Navigator project in partnership with East Devon Council.

- 1.38 Moving forward we will continue to focus on each of these priorities equally. This strategy therefore seeks to mirror this key work in progress and set out the following objectives under each preventing homelessness priority.

### **Objective 12 – Minimising rough sleeping**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Successful applications for external funding streams including MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative, on-going Navigator projects delivery and development of our night shelter accommodation during the winter months</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>5 or less rough sleepers within Mid Devon at any one time</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025</b>  |

### **Objective 13 – Maximising prevention activities and outcomes**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Working with the Housing Options Accommodation Officer to facilitate or provide support for all households at risk of homelessness and ensure there is sufficient temporary or emergency accommodation available to all priority households</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>90% of all temporary or emergency accommodation for priority households provided within the district / putting in place support to help tenants to sustain their tenancies where appropriate</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025</b>   |

### **Objective 14 – Increasing accommodation options**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Work with the Planning Service and through this wider strategy to deliver more affordable accommodation, review Deposit and Advance Rent Scheme (DARS) and promote and work with Public Health private sector housing officers and private sector in increase good quality private sector accommodation</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>See Objectives 3 – 5 and affordance housing, review DARS scheme by 2022 and integration of the Housing Options team with Public Health from August 2021</b>   |

**Source - Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025**

**Objective 15 – Improving health and wellbeing by supporting those with complex needs**

**How measured - Supporting those at risk of/experiencing domestic abuse and wider vulnerable groups at risk of homelessness, build relationships with local GPs and other support services and making appropriate referrals and developing protocols of working with partner agencies**

**Target - Develop delivery plan for Domestic Abuse Act Tier 2 capacity funding 2021/22/membership of Devon Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, ongoing engagement with other fora including MARAC (Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse), Early Help, Safeguarding and TAF (Team Around the Family) and the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership (CSP)**

**Source - Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025, East & Mid Devon CSP Action Plan 2021/22**

***Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople provision***

1.39 National planning policy makes clear the requirement for Local Authorities to assess the need for traveller sites and to plan for these sites in a sustainable manner over a reasonable timescale. There is also a legal requirement placed on Local Authorities through the Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. Compliance with the duties may involve treating some persons more favourably than others. Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as separate racial groups through the Equality Act 2010 and these groups are protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a duty on Local Authorities to promote race equality. It is in this context of national planning policy and legal duties that Local Authorities have a responsibility to develop fair and effective strategies to meet the housing needs of travellers through the identification of land for sites.

1.40 The Mid Devon Local Plan allocates sites for Gypsies and Travellers as part of sustainable planned urban extensions at Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton, that will provide for at least 25 pitches, and sets out policies (i.e Policy DM7) for sites coming forward on private sites in suitable locations elsewhere in the district. This is in response to

the Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment 2015 (GTAA) which has identified a need between 2014 – 2034 for 35 pitches for Gypsies and Traveller and 11 plots for Travelling Showpeople.

A new GTAA will be prepared in 2021 which will be used to help inform the preparation of a new Local Plan for Mid Devon.

- 1.41 When planning permission is granted for a Gypsy or Traveller site, often this is subject to one or more conditions to make the development acceptable in planning terms. This can include restricting the occupancy of the site to a specific family, and not allowing occupancy by other Gypsies or Travellers. The housing needs of households can change over time and this could lead to circumstances where existing pitches on sites may become vacant, or where additional pitches may be needed. It is recognised there is a need for the Council to understand where the occupancy of pitches on existing sites in Mid Devon may have changed and where there may be opportunities on existing sites to bring vacant pitches back into use, or space for new pitches to meet the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Mid Devon. These opportunities will need to be looked at further in terms of whether the site is suitable in planning terms, what occupancy restriction is justified and necessary, and would be subject to planning permission being granted and compliance other relevant legislation.
- 1.42 Travelling showpeople have their own requirements for sites ('yards') to provide homes and also to accommodate vehicles and equipment. No new sites for have yet been identified for travelling showpeople in Mid Devon.
- 1.43 The Council will work landowners, developers, registered providers and the travelling community to identify and bring forwards opportunities in the district that can help secure the delivery of new sites and pitches to provide homes for Gypsies, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople. The Council runs a Forum for Gypsies and Travellers in Mid Devon which provides an opportunity to discuss the provision of pitches in the district, welfare needs and other matters of interest to the travelling community.
- 1.44 The Council maintains a waiting list for Gypsy and Traveller households to register their need for pitch in Mid Devon. Although there is no public travellers site or pitches that are currently available in Mid Devon the waiting list can be used to help keep the Council better informed of current need and also in developing a policy for the future allocation of pitches once these become available on sites allocated in the Local Plan.
- 1.45 Council's in Devon are currently exploring the potential for establishing one or more negotiated stopping sites across the county, which can help avoid unauthorised encampments. A negotiated stopping site can be a means to provide a manage approach to Gypsies and Travellers who have a connection to the area but who

only require a pitch provision for short periods of time each year and are travelling the remainder of the year. One or more such sites could be made available at short notice with the agreement of the landowner and would be preferable to unauthorised encampments on the roadside, in car parks or other sensitive land such as areas of public open space and playing fields. The Council has recently completed a 'call for sites' for its Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment which will be used to inform the preparation of a new Local Plan for Mid Devon. The Council will review submissions received to explore where there may be potential opportunities for identifying a suitable negotiated stopping site and will work with landowners and their agents, to help bring a site forward where this may be acceptable in planning terms and where satisfactory management arrangements can be agreed and put in place. This may include engagement with the both the local travelling and settled communities.

### **Objective 16 – Meet the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Delivery of new pitches</b>                |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>8 pitches between 2021 - 2025</b>          |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Local Plan /Mid Devon KPI 32</b> |

#### ***Modern methods of construction***

1.46 The Council recognises that Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) can provide a wide range of benefits including faster construction, higher environmental standards and reduced costs compared to traditional building techniques. It is considered that MMC can help diversify the housing offer across Mid Devon, aiding affordability and sustainable design. The Town and Country Planning Association outlines a number of benefits and challenges associated with MMC as follows:

##### **Benefits**

- Speed of delivery
- Amenity during construction
- Build Cost
- Build quality
- Environmental Performance
- Sustainability

##### **Challenges**

- Evidence of durability
- Procurement
- Integrating planning and MMC
- Funding and mortgage availability

- Place-making and design concerns

1.47 Modern Methods of Construction encompasses a wide range of construction techniques, all of which differ from 'traditional' building methods. Research undertaken by the National House Building Council (NHBC) Foundation defines MMC as including the following approaches:

- Volumetric (modular) manufactured units
- Pods (particularly bathroom and kitchen)
- Panelised systems (including open and closed panel timber frame systems, open and closed panel steel frame panels, structural insulated panels (SIPS), cross-laminated timber (CLT)).
- Sub-assemblies and components (including door sets, timber I-beams, prefabricated chimneys, prefabricated dormers, floor cassettes, roof cassettes).
- Site-based MMC (including thin-joint masonry and insulated structural framework (ICF))

1.48 The Council is keen to support a wide range of MMC and their implementation within Mid Devon, and the Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 encourages the piloting of MMC in Mid Devon. The Council will also seek to engage with the development industry and its strategic partners to identify, and pilot opportunities in the district. The preparation of a new Local Plan will provide an opportunity for new policy to support MMC. The TCPA recommends other measures including raising awareness and understanding of MMC, and investigating opportunities for MMC on Council owned sites.

### **Objective 17 – Pilot modern methods of construction (MMC)**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Number of MMC development schemes in the district</b>         |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>4 schemes granted planning permission between 2021 - 2025</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024</b>                                |

### **Custom and Self-Build**

1.49 The Government wants to enable more people to build their own home. Currently, only 8% of new homes are built in this way in the UK, but this form of custom and self-Build housing is growing in popularity. The Council recognises the benefits of custom and self-build in meeting the housing needs of Mid Devon residents. Custom and self-build is also more likely to draw upon local tradespeople and suppliers, supporting the local economy.

Source: Delivering Custom and Self Build Housing Developments in your community

- 1.50 The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 requires that the Council keeps a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in the Mid Devon area for their own self-build and custom housebuilding. The Mid Devon Self Build Register was established in April 2016. The Act also places two land duties on the Council; the 'duty to grant planning permission etc' and the 'duty as regards registers'. Fundamentally, the 'duty to grant planning permission etc' requires Mid Devon District Council to give suitable development permission to enough suitable serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the area. The level of demand is established by reference to the number of entries added to the Council's register during a base period. At the end of each base period, the Council has 3 years in which to permission an equivalent number of plots of land, which are suitable for self-build and custom housebuilding, as there are entries for that base period. The second land duty, 'duty as regards registers' requires the Council to have regard to the register when carrying out its planning, housing, land disposal and regeneration functions.
- 1.51 The Mid Devon Local Plan 2013 – 2033 includes a number of policies to support the delivery of custom and self-build. Policy S3 parts c) and d) stipulate:
- c) To support self-build and custom dwellings meeting the needs of local communities, such dwellings will be permitted as affordable housing in locations outside settlement limits in accordance with Policy DM6;
  - d) To support self-build and custom housing on sites of 20 dwellings or more developers will supply at least 5% of serviced dwelling plots for sale to self-builders for a period of 12 months per plot and any plots subsequently developed for self-build must be completed within 3 years of purchase by a self-builder.
- 1.52 The Council will prepare and adopt a Custom and Self-Build SPD to provide more detailed guidance to support the implementation of the Local Plan policies. The SPD will provide an opportunity to identify how custom and self-build homes can harness low energy design and energy construction – Arron to add text – discussed 26.05.2021
- 1.53 The Council will work with individuals, local communities, landowners and developers to raise awareness of custom and self-build.
- 1.54 The Council will investigate opportunities for community-led custom and self-build when supporting community groups.



**Objective 18 - Facilitate the delivery of serviced plots for custom and self-build housing**

**How measured -** Monitor serviced plots granted planning permission  
**Target -** Minimum 20 serviced plots between 2021 - 2025  
**Source -** Mid Devon Local Plan / Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 / Mid Devon KPI 31

**Objective 19 - Support custom and self-build**

**How measured -** Prepare detailed guidance in a Custom and Self Build Supplementary Planning Document  
**Target -** Adopt Custom and Self Build Supplementary Planning Document – spring 2022  
**Source -** Mid Devon Local Plan / Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Strategic Housing Priority 2: Optimise existing housing - fit for purpose healthy, sustainable, adaptable homes optimised for high energy efficiency and low carbon impact**

There are 8 objectives within this strategic priority:

#### ***Plan and support for future health needs***

Objective 20 – Identifying needs and trends

Objective 21 – Supporting specific needs

Objective 22 – Housing Assistance Policy (Better Care Fund)

Objective 23 – Adapting for neuro-diversity in social housing

Objective 24 – Improving air quality at existing residential locations in Air Quality Management Areas

#### ***Market conditions for local builders and related small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)***

Objective 25 - Support local housebuilders

#### ***Climate change and existing housing***

Objective 26 – Climate change and existing Council housing stock

Objective 27 – Climate change and existing private housing stock

### 2.0 Optimise

2.1 The Council wants to meet the housing needs of all communities and the challenges of an ageing population. This Strategy aims to promote the best use of current housing stock, whatever the tenure, and further enable new housing that is built to a standard that will enhance the health and wellbeing of future occupants.

#### ***Plan and support for future health needs***

2.2 We plan to meet future health needs in a variety of ways:

- Work collaboratively with providers to respond to a need for extra care facilities
- Ensure new affordable housing for older people adequately meets future needs (including mobility needs and issues such as dementia), in locations close to local amenities and of a design and type that is attractive to older people
- Encourage the development of energy efficient affordable homes to reduce carbon emissions and reduce household heating costs

- Enable wheelchair standard accommodation on new housing developments in line with adopted planning policy requirements to actively increase the stock of this type of affordable housing
- Optimise matching of adapted housing stock to those most in need through a Disabled Adapted Needs Panel
- Promote housing development to include adequate natural spaces and tree planting

2.3 To support this there are several specific objectives:

### **Objective 20 – Identifying needs and trends**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Interrogate new 2021 Census data and the existing Devon Home Choice (DHC) register to predict future housing trends and needs</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Establish significant areas of interest by Dec 2021 ready for overlay with the new data in 2022</b>                               |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>2021 Census/DHC Register</b>  |

### **Objective 21 – Supporting specific needs**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Ongoing support and development of key support services and provision</b>  |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Continued support 2021-25 for the Council's Lifeline alarm service, membership of Devon Home Choice social housing allocations scheme with specified provision for adaptations and work with Devon County Council to provide specialist adapted and independent living accommodation</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Housing Assistance Policy 2019, Devon Housing and Accommodation Strategy 2020-25 and Tenancy Strategy</b>  |

### **Objective 22 – Housing Assistance Policy (Better Care Fund)**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Promote and deliver against updated Housing Assistance Policy</b>  |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Updated policy for 2022-25 covering disabled facilities grants, accessible and healthy homes, home improvement loans, debt support and affordable warmth/energy efficiency support</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Housing Assistance Policy 2019, Better Care Fund (BCF) and Devon Housing and Accommodation Strategy 2020-25</b>  |

### **Objective 23 – Adapting for neuro-diversity in social housing**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>We will identify and adopted new standards for our new Council Housing and consider retrofit where possible in respect of neuro-diversity needs including dementia/related conditions, autism, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and mental health conditions such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Work with Devon County Council to develop and pilot a draft neuro-diversity standard for social housing by 2022</b>   |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Better Care Fund and Devon Housing and Accommodation Strategy 2020-25</b>   |

- 2.4 We can also optimise the quality of our existing housing in areas where residential properties are exposed to poor air quality. This is a significant public health issue which can shorten lives, reduce quality of life and cause serious illness. Tackling local pollution will therefore improve future health prospects of those living in affected areas. The town-centre areas of both Cridton and Cullompton have been formally declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) where we have a duty to improve local pollution concentrations at locations where they are most impactful
- 2.5 This strategy therefore interlinks with our formal Air Quality Action Planning and the following objective.

### **Objective 24 – Improving air quality at existing residential locations in Air Quality Management Areas**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Update and adopt a new Air Quality Action Plan for Cridton and Cullompton AQMAs by the end of 2021</b>           |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Various specific measures and targets set out in the Action Plan with and overall delivery period of 2021-25</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020</b>  |

- 2.6 We will also update our existing Supplementary Planning Document on Air Quality during 2021-22 in order to assess the impact of new development on existing accommodation but also to protect new development from exposure to unacceptably high local pollution levels over air quality limit values.

***Market conditions for local builders and related small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)***

- 2.7 Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of the district.
- 2.8 The adopted Local Plan allocates a range of different sized sites for housing across the district, including 19 sites below 1 hectare with potential for a combined minimum of 270 homes. This is less than 4% of the total housing requirement in the local plan.
- 2.9 National planning policy now requires the Council to accommodate at least 10% of its housing requirement on sites no larger than 1 hectare, which will be reflected through the preparation of a new Local Plan for the district.
- 2.10 Increasing the provision of smaller sites will benefit local builders and SME's by helping to provide more opportunities to access suitable land for development, and reduce reliance on larger sites which may be dominated by national volume house builders. It can also help to diversify the housing market through an increased number of outlets and choice of house types, help foster innovation, boost productivity and includes sites that are capable of being built out relatively quickly and which can increase housing supply. There are also likely to be benefits to the local economy in terms of jobs and the use of suppliers. Diversifying the housing market, for example through making provision for custom and self-builders, offers the potential for significant local benefits to the Mid Devon economy, as well as supporting local builders and SMEs. A survey of SME housebuilding firms indicates, "52% have built new homes in the last year to the plans and specification of the homeowner (custom and self-build)".
- 2.11 Research undertaken for Mid Devon District Council in late 2019 (Analysis of the economic benefits of self-build and custom housebuilding to the local economy Chamberlain Walker Economics Ltd) estimated that 45 pence in every £ invested in custom and self-build (CSB) homes is spent locally, double the estimated 22 pence in every £ invested by mainstream housebuilders. In addition, 65% of CSB labour is local (including the economic value of DIY labour). This is higher than the estimated 43% of major housebuilder labour that is local.
- 2.12 Custom and Self-Builders and SME builders rely heavily on builder's merchants – either national companies but with local branches employing local people.
- 2.13 Smaller sites may also be more attractive to community led housing groups and people wishing to commission or build their own home. Where the Council will bring land forward for housing development this can provide an opportunity to partner with a

one or more SME housebuilders, including housebuilders local to the district. In this regard, the Council's own development company (3 Rivers Development Ltd) may be a conduit to local SME builders, trades and merchants.

### **Objective 25 - Support local housebuilders**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Number of SME house builders supported</b>  |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Subdivision of at least 1 site greater than 1 hectare for smaller builders. Partner with at least one a SME housebuilder on a Council development site (market or social housing)</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon Local Plan / National Planning Policy Framework / Housing Revenue Account</b>   |

### ***Climate change and existing housing***

- 2.14 The challenges to the district noted in the introduction of this Strategy include reference that the Council has also declared a Climate Emergency and all new policy and strategy documents will need to be set against our low carbon and other environmental priorities. We are working with all Devon local authorities to a County wide target of 2050, aiming for Mid Devon District Council to achieve Net Zero by a more ambitious date of 2030, and supporting Mid Devon communities to reach Net Zero.
- 2.15 Chapter one considers design standards and methods of construction for new housing but we must consider how we can optimise our own housing stock and that across all ownership and tenure within the district. In this regard, we therefore set out the following objectives to help us address this climate emergency.

### **Objective 26 – Climate change and existing Council housing stock**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Retrofit, refurbish and update our existing stock to a zero-carbon standard</b>  |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Ensure 15% of our existing stock (2021 baseline) meets zero-carbon standard by 2030 and all stock by 2050. This can be delivered through capital works investment via the rolling 30-year Housing Revenue Account maintenance fund and through successful bids into national grant schemes (e.g. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) with off-setting if required</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020-2024 / Climate Strategy / Climate Action Plan / Housing Revenue Account</b>  |

**Objective 27 – Climate change and existing private housing stock**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Encourage the retrofit, refurbishment and update our existing private sector stock to a low carbon standard</b>  |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Support the delivery of the Energy Company Obligation – Flexibility Eligibility (ECO-Flex) scheme 2021-22 with a target of 250 Local Authority Declarations (LADs) annually.<br/>Support for/bids into other national schemes including; Home Upgrade (HUG) Schemes, Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) compliance and enforcement funding, as well as the Devon County Council Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme Local Authority Delivery Scheme round 3 (LAD 3)</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020-2024 / Climate Strategy / Climate Action Plan / BEIS and MHCLG</b>   |



# CHAPTER THREE

## Strategic Housing Priority 3: Make - making the most of our existing homes across private and public sector in all forms of tenure

There are 11 objectives within this strategic priority:

### ***Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing***

Objective 28 – Empty Homes Plan

Objective 29 – Empty Dwelling Management Orders

Objective 30 – Key workers

Objective 31 – Tenancy Strategy (Council Housing)

Objective 32 – Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

### ***Working with the private sector***

Objective 33 – Private sector housing standards

Objective 34 – Private sector landlord engagement and support

Objective 35 – Private sector accommodation and homelessness

### ***Making the best use of privately owned and occupied homes***

Objective 36 – Home Improvement Loans and debt consolidation

Objective 37 – Home Improvement Loans delivery

Objective 38 – Better Care Fund

## 3.0 Making the most

### ***Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing***

- 3.1 Managing and improving the quality of the existing stock of more than 35,000 properties in all forms of ownership and tenure is important. Placed alongside improving our neighbourhoods, this has a direct impact on our communities – on their health, well-being, education, prosperity and safety.
- 3.2 The latest English Housing Survey Headline Report for 2019-20 was published in December 2020. The report identifies that the percentage of private rented homes has stabilised for the last two years at 19% of the housing stock. This report does not break the data down into local area but the profile for Mid Devon on the Office of National Statistics site (ONS) states that the level of private renting in Mid Devon is 15.5%.

- 3.3 The ONS figures are based on 2011 Census data, so comparing this to the English Housing survey for 2010-11 the national average for the private rented sector was 16.5%. Therefore the level of private renting in the area is slightly under the national average at that time. Based on this comparison it is fairly safe to assume that given the rise of 2.5% nationally in the last 10 years, the level of private rented in Mid Devon will have increased also to around 18%.
- 3.4 The new census for 2021 will provide a more accurate account of local data once published.
- 3.5 The private rented sector has overtaken the level of social rented accommodation which currently stands at 17% nationally, making the private rented sector critical for the housing of local residents.
- 3.6 We can deliver on this overarching objective through a wide range of inter-linked activities as set out below.
- Encouraging long-term empty homes back into use
  - Develop proactive relationships and work collaboratively with Registered Providers for mutual benefit
  - Embed and implement a new Tenancy Strategy
  - Encourage tenants in social housing to downsize
  - Work with our partners to seek re-development opportunities to enhance the current housing stock and to meet the needs of residents
  - Work with our Registered Provider partners to identify and improve issues in their stock; to deliver low cost aids and adaptations in their housing stock to support their tenants; and develop improvements in the recording and identification of adapted units within the existing affordable housing stock
  - Promote and support energy efficiency in homes
  - Ensure the Private rented sector meets the requirements of The Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations
  - Develop a Fuel Poverty Action Plan; that will incorporate closer working with partner organisations, that pool knowledge and resources to ensure that fuel poor residents receive support; target wards which have higher fuel poverty rates than the regional average. Target all F & G energy performance rated properties
  - Develop and promote an intermediate housing register specifically for key workers with supply from the private rented sector and property developed by the Councils
  - Monitor and actively promote high standards in the rented sector and take appropriate action where standards are not being met, to tackle disrepair, poor housing conditions and criminal/rogue landlords

- Support and encourage new, high quality and well managed, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the local area, including offering a management service ourselves, whilst licensing all HMOs that are subject to mandatory licensing
- Deliver Private Rented Sector Landlords' & Letting Agents' Forums and other networking opportunities for private landlords; promoting the events widely and using them to consult the Private Rented Sector on the issues that are affecting them
- Support Tenants and stand firm in situations where Landlords attempt retaliatory evictions
- Work with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods.

3.7 Many of these activities are linked to our core duty as a registered provider as well as being a regulator of private-sector housing. Nonetheless, to support this are several specific objectives:

#### **Objective 28 – Empty Homes Plan**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Promote and deliver against updated Empty Homes Plan</b>   |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Building on the successful first empty homes plan with updated plan for 2022-25 and an annual target of bringing 72 homes back into use annually</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Empty Homes Plan 2019 - 21</b>   |

#### **Objective 29 – Empty Dwelling Management Orders**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Review the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders as a tool for bringing homes back into use</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Review completed by 2021</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Empty Homes Plan 2019 - 21 and updated plan 2022 - 25</b>   |

#### **Objective 30 – Key workers**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Review development of an intermediate housing register specifically for key workers with supply from the private rented sector and property developed by the Council</b>                                |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Review practicalities and potential benefits of a Key Workers register by 2022 with possible link into Devon Home Choice (social housing) and private sector rentals for allocations to Key Workers</b> |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Covid-19 recovery response/National Housing Federation and MHCLG</b>  |

### **Objective 31 – Tenancy Strategy**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Promote and deliver against updated Tenancy Strategy. The strategy will include an aim to a shared database/data sharing arrangement with our registered provider and other partners to highlight issues and look at trends around stock condition, decent homes standard and wider neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour issues. This will also be reviewed against the emerging Government social housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Strategy updated and adopted by 2023</b>   |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Tenancy Strategy/Government Social Housing White Paper 2020</b>  |

### **Objective 32 – Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Support and encourage new, high quality and well managed, Houses in Multiple Occupation in the local area, including review of offering a management service ourselves. Inspect all potential HMOs whilst licensing all that are subject to mandatory licensing and/or take relevant enforcement action against non-compliant landlords</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>100% of potential HMO properties assessed. Review option of an MDDC management service by 2022. Ongoing target of all HMOs to meet license conditions and management regulations</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024/HMO KPI/East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership</b>  |

### ***Working with the private sector***

- 3.8 The council's private sector housing function sits within the Public Health and Housing Options Service. This team has the core aim to help improve the health, safety and welfare of residents living in the private sector across the district of Mid Devon
- 3.9 The team follows a robust and transparent approach rather than an informal route to ensure there is a level playing field amongst landlords in the sector and all landlords are treated in the same way. This includes a formal inspection and assessment and appropriate enforcement action is taken if necessary. This makes it clear and transparent for all involved on the type of service to expect.

- 3.10 This approach was introduced in 2017 and has had the effect of improving private sector homes in a timely manner and on average the team serves 65 improvement notices a year.
- 3.11 This approach to the private rented sector not only improves the health and safety of the home for the tenants but also prevents homelessness by ensuring there is adequate and appropriate housing available, particularly given that social housing stock is in high demand.
- 3.12 Alongside enforcement action, the team undertake a number of activities to try and engage landlords and encourage them to self-regulate. The introduction of the Landlord Networking Event in 2017 aimed to treat landlords professionally and provide the knowledge and tools they needed to improve their own properties. The success of the event has meant that it has been an annual occurrence and has led to additional ideas for engagement.
- 3.13 Landlords can sign up to a notification service called 'Pin Point' that provides bite sized information on legislative changes as well as schemes and/or grants that could be relevant to the sector. In addition the team have experimented with online training sessions for landlords and this is an area that needs further work and promotion.
- 3.14 Finally, the team are currently reviewing the idea of a landlord registration scheme. So far only a handful of landlords have signed up to the idea so this is another area for further development.
- 3.15 Engagement with the council is important for ensuring the private rented sector is safe and functions effectively. It is also important for building the relationship between the council and landlords so that they can approach us for advice but equally understand that where enforcement action is taken it is fair and equitable.

### **Objective 33 – Private sector housing standards**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Monitor and actively promote high standards in the private rented sector and take appropriate action where standards are not being met, to tackle disrepair, poor housing conditions and criminal/rogue landlords</b>   |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Ensure 95% of service requests are actioned within service standards/monitor and evaluate trends of service delivery and enforcement outcomes annually to develop a rolling programme of effective engagement with private sector landlords to reduce the level of Category 1 hazards identified across the private rented housing stock. In serious cases,</b> |

**use banning orders and add landlords to the national rogue landlord database**  
**Source - Corporate Plan 2020-2024/HMO KPI/East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership/Housing Act 2004 and Housing and Planning Act 2016**

**Objective 34 – Private sector landlord engagement and support**

**How measured - Undertake specific activities to engage, guide and advise private sector residential landlords**  
**Target - 9 engagement activities annually including the annual landlord networking event, 'Pin Point' e-newsletter and webinars or specific events**  
**Source - Mid Devon KPI CP – PSH - 08**

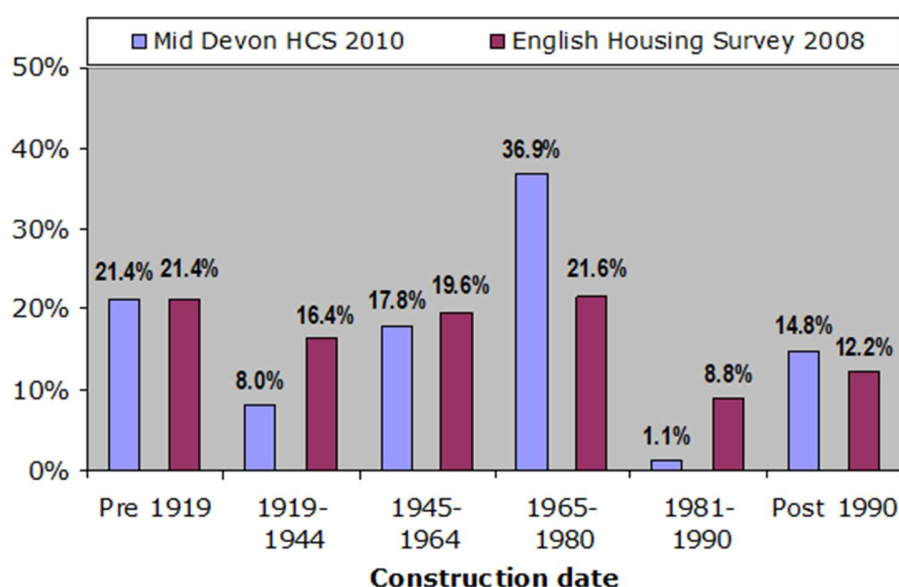
- 3.16 As set out above, the aim to engage with landlords is considered a priority for this strategy and we intend to build on this. Not only in relation to the condition of the property but also to encourage landlords to work with us in respect of preventing homelessness and providing alternative accommodation.
- 3.17 In 2011 The Localism Act allowed for councils to use the private rented sector to discharge its homelessness duty as an alternative to using B&B/Hostels/Hotels. This recognises that Council owned accommodation and the hospitality sector alone cannot meet the potential homeless and temporary or emergency accommodation needs alone and private sector landlords have a key role in meeting any gap. Although available as an option it is not often used due to the lack of engagement from private sector landlords and the fear of coming under scrutiny in respect of enforcement and housing conditions.
- 3.17 Better engagement and working relationships with landlords would greatly improve the availability of private rented accommodation as a housing and homelessness option. A further objective for this strategy therefore is to continue to build on our engagement and to identify ways to encourage landlords to work with us more closely in this respect. The recent move of our dedicated Housing Options and Homeless Team into the Council's Public Health team will also facilitate closer working with Private Sector housing colleagues to help deliver this objective.

**Objective 35 – Private sector accommodation and homelessness**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Use opportunities for engagement developed through Objective 32 to specifically increase the availability of private sector rented accommodation as a homelessness option</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>4 activities within Objective 31 to specifically target options for homelessness accommodation in this sector</b>   |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon KPI CP – PSH – 08 and Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025</b>   |

***Making the best use of privately owned and occupied homes***

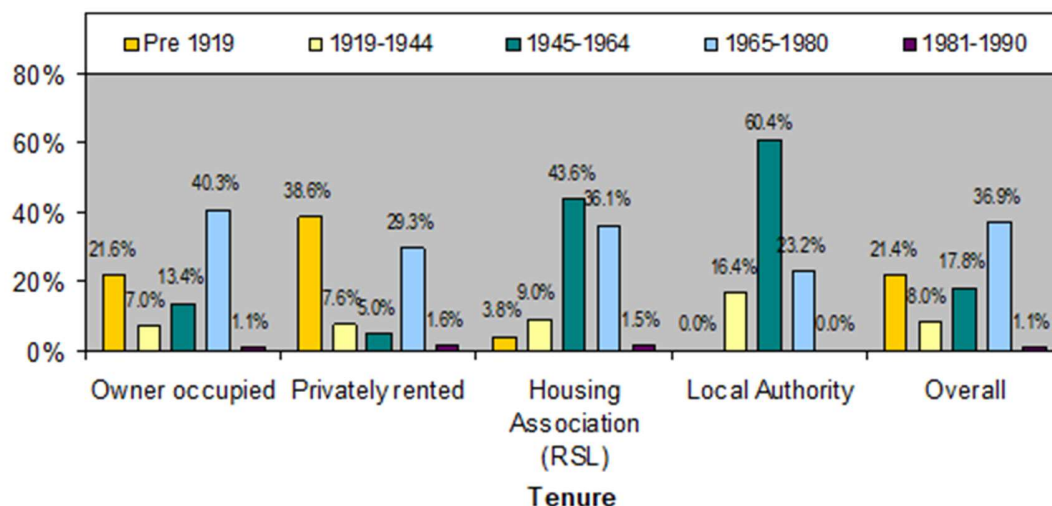
3.19 As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, the majority of housing within the private sector is owner occupied. The stock across the district ranges in age and construction. The stock condition survey in 2010 identifies the profile of the housing stock as shown below.



3.20 The survey comments that 'Mid Devon differed from the national profile in that the proportion of dwellings built during the 1965 – 1980 period was substantially higher than nationally (36.9% compared with 21.6%), with post 1990 dwellings also being slightly higher (14.8% compared with 12.2%). The proportions of dwellings built in all other age bands was lower, in particular the interwar period (8.0% compared with 16.4%) and 1981 to 1990 dwellings (1.1% compared with 8.8%).'

3.21 This indicates that a high proportion of homes in the district are of a type that require modernisation and in particular lack sufficient heating and insulation.

The stock condition survey also shows the proportion of owner occupiers living in the properties of various ages as can be seen below.



- 3.22 It is likely that over the last 10 years this profile has changed and the latest profile will not be due until the results of the census 2021 are available. However based on this information, and as mentioned above it is likely that a high proportion of these homes are likely to require repairs due to their age and construction. As part of our work to optimize existing houses (Chapter Two), we build on the review of the 2021 census set out in Objective 19 to gain an up to date understanding of stock condition which will inform future reviews of this strategy.
- 3.23 Our current Housing Assistance Policy (2019) also provides for home improvement loans and a commitment to provide low-cost, financially ethical lending to owner occupiers throughout the district.
- 3.24 The scheme is administered on behalf of the council by Lendology CIC. They are a community interest company and over the last 3 years have started to expand their lending in the mid Devon area. Loans are available at an interest rate of 4.2% APR which is substantially lower than many loan companies and specialises in assisting people who may not normally be able to access a loan on the high street. The loan can be used to help with all types of home repairs and improvements and the Lendology team will ensure that the loan is affordable to the customer.
- 3.25 The loan scheme has the capability to be expanded to assist with other areas such as debt consolidation or used to help prevent homelessness where rents or mortgages have fallen behind. This has become a particular concern as a result of the ongoing Covid pandemic and requires further investigation.



3.26 Objective 21 (Chapter Two) provides for a commitment to the ongoing delivery of our Housing Assistance Policy including the loan scheme. Nonetheless, the following specific objective provides for clear targets around expanding the scope of the loans and loan delivery.

### **Objective 36 – Home Improvement Loans and debt consolidation**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Scope of the Home Improvement Loan scheme reviewed to evaluate inclusion of debt consolidation within parameters sustainable for scheme overall</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Review completed by 2022</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Debt Recovery Policy and Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025</b>  |

### **Objective 37 – Home Improvement Loans delivery**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Home Improvement Loans sanctioned annually</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>10 loans sanctioned annually 2022-2025</b>     |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Mid Devon KPI CP – PSH – 08 (updated)</b>      |

3.27 In 2015 the government introduced the Better Care fund in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The fund is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government (now MHCLG – Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) and includes the grant allocation for disabled facilities grants (DFG).

3.28 In 2017/18, Devon County Council and the District Councils identified an opportunity to provide additional grant and loan products to meet these conditions and deliver against the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities. This led to the development of the Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy. This forms the basis of our current locally adopted Housing Assistance Policy as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter. As a result, Better Care Funding (BCF) is used quite widely already to provide a range of support of both mandatory (DFG) and other discretionary support to occupiers of privately owned accommodation as set out in the Policy:

- Housing Assistance Grants
- Stairlift Grants
- Home Improvement Loan scheme
- Healthy Homes Grants
- ECO Flex top-up (energy efficiency measures)

3.29 Linked to our commitment to review and update our current Housing Assistance Policy in the widest sense (see Objective 21 in Chapter Two), there is a specific further objective to explore our use of the Better Care Fund.

**Objective 38 – Better Care Fund**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Updated or new schemes or services that meet the requirements of the Better Care Fund (BCF) to support improved residential accommodation standards in existing homes</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>Work with Devon County Council and other Devon Local Authorities to identify other schemes and services by 2022</b>   |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>2017-19 Integration and Better Care fund policy framework document</b>  |

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Strategic Housing Priority 4: Engage - engaging and working with others including partner organisations to deliver our aims**

There are 2 objectives within this strategic priority:

#### ***Strategic Housing role***

Objective 39 – Joint Local Housing Needs Assessment

Objective 40 – Actively engage in partnership working

#### **4.0 Engage**

- 4.1 The Council recognises the need to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders. During the Covid pandemic, this has assumed an increased significance especially with regard to the delivery of front line services and has helped shape how we do things now and in the future.
- 4.2 We are active participants in many formal partnerships which deliver the benefits of economies of scale. However, we also work with smaller organisations such as the Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) in Tiverton and Navigate CIO to deliver good outcomes for the people of our District.
- 4.3 This chapter sets out a wide range of informal and formal partnerships and joint working that will help deliver all the wider priorities and objectives set out in this Strategy. Given the diverse, sometimes complex and variable nature of these partnerships then this chapter sets out relatively few direct objectives, nonetheless is important in setting out the context in which we work and wide range of opportunities that are in place and will be developed to support our vision to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our residents through a greater choice of high-quality new and adapted homes.

#### ***Strategic Housing role***

##### Local Housing Needs Assessment – working with other Councils

- 4.4 Mid Devon forms part of a much larger housing market area that also includes Exeter city, Teignbridge and East Devon Districts and part of the Dartmoor National Park. The Council has previously worked collaboratively with other Councils in the Exeter Housing Market Area in the preparation of assessments of housing need, with the most recent technical study being completed in 2015.

- 4.5 District level housing need for informing the preparation of Local Plans for planning purposes must now follow a national standard method that is set by the Government unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. However, there will continue to be a need for the Councils in the Exeter Housing Market Area to undertake local housing needs assessments to understand the size, type and tenure of housing need for different groups in the community (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes). This assessment shall be reflected in planning policies and can also be used to inform housing strategies and other plans and programmes.
- 4.6 The Councils in the Exeter Housing Market Area are currently commissioning a suitable consultant to undertake a Local Housing Needs Assessment. This will be completed in 2022 and will be used to help inform the preparation of a new Local Plan for Mid Devon, a new Supplementary Planning Document for meeting housing needs, and this Mid Devon Housing Strategy.
- 4.7 Exeter City Council, and East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge District Councils, in partnership with Devon County Council are currently preparing a non-statutory joint plan, to include a joint strategy and infrastructure matters, for the area previously referred to as the "Greater Exeter" area. This joint plan can include objectives for housing across the area.
- 4.8 The Council will also continue to engage with Councils outside the Exeter Housing Market Area about housing and other strategic planning matters, for example with North Devon District Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 4.9 In order to take this strategic housing work we have the following objective.

### **Objective 39 – Joint Local Housing Needs Assessment**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>Strategic partnership working on housing matters across the Exeter Housing Market Area through completion of a joint Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA)</b> |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>1 LHNA completed in 2021 - 2022</b>  |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Joint working arrangements approved by Council 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020</b>   |

### Devon Rural Housing Partnership and Devon Communities Together

- 4.10 The Council is a partner of the Devon Rural Housing Partnership, which aims to support rural communities in developing sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs and aspirations of local people and to support the sustainability of those communities. Devon Communities Together is an independent charity engaged in a wide range of projects and services that support its vision of dynamic Devon communities shaping their own futures, and fulfils the role of the accountable body and managing agent for the Devon Rural Housing Enabler programme on behalf of the Devon Rural Housing Partnership.

### Right To Build Task Force

- 4.11 This provides advice and information to organisations including local authorities, landowners, land promoters, to support the delivery of custom and self-build homes. The Council is currently providing advice to other local authorities through the Right to Build Task Force and is a member of the National Custom and Self-Build Association.

### Mid Devon Gypsy and Traveller Forum

- 4.12 The Forum is led by the Council and provides an opportunity for members of the travelling community to meet with officers and elected Members to discuss their housing needs and other matters.

### Town and Parish Councils

- 4.13 The Council can provide advice and support to town and parish councils to help them prepare parish and neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity for communities to help shape and have greater influence on the development in their local areas.

### Community engagement

- 4.14 The preparation of plans, programmes and strategies by the Council will need to involve community engagement at key stages in their preparation, where there are legal requirements to do so and it is necessary and good practice. This can provide significant opportunities for members of the public to have their say in shaping the way in which the Council works toward facilitating the delivery of homes to meet the needs of people from all parts of the Mid Devon community.

Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership and Rough Sleeping

- 4.15 In line with the provisions of our strategy, our approach to the management of homelessness and rough sleeping involves working in partnership with other agencies, as required. The Council is involved in the Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership (DCHOP) which works to ensure that there is a consistent approach to these issues across the peninsula. The Council makes a small financial contribution to support the work of the partnership. This pays for a dedicated Officer who is able to undertake research, to contribute to policy development and to arrange training and networking events
- 4.16 During the Covid pandemic, our Housing Options team participated in the regular local coordination cell meetings convened by the Local Resilience Form which brought together a range of partners with the aim of ensuring that vulnerable people were receiving all the help that they required to safeguard them from infection. This meeting was used as a mechanism for joint working and decision-making and included a wider range of partners than DCHOP and the sub-group where matters associated with rough sleeping were discussed and action agreed.
- 4.17 Our Housing Options Accommodation Officer was appointed using the monies obtained under the Government Rough Sleeper Initiative funding stream to increase options for homeless people and working to increase and to improve the links with local estate agents and private sector landlords. One aim of the role is to support tenants to sustain their tenancies, thereby offering reassurance to landlords that the Council can support them to ensure that any tenancy breaches are minimised.
- 4.18 The Council has a dedicated, multiple occupancy property which is used to accommodate those in housing need who present a low risk. Floating support to clients living at this scheme is currently provided by the YMCA. The aim is to support the transition of these people into their own self-contained accommodation, providing advice and assistance to help them become used to organising their own affairs, setting up accounts with utility companies, understanding their tenancy obligations and so on.

Working with other Registered Providers and Social Landlords

- 4.19 The Council works in partnership with the other local authorities (including the unitary authorities in Plymouth and Torbay) in Devon to deliver a choice based lettings scheme known as Devon Home Choice (DHC). All the other registered providers which operate across Devon are also involved in the scheme as partners.
- 4.20 The partnership provides a means by which people can register for a home in Devon, and also search and bid for homes.

Data extracted from the Devon Home Choice system can be used to understand the expressed 'demand' for homes in Mid Devon and can be used along-side assessments of housing need to help the Council prepare plans, programme and strategies for housing, working with Registered Providers, community housing groups and the development industry, and in the management and letting of its own housing stock.

- 4.21 The DHC scheme includes an assessment framework which contains detailed criteria against which housing need is determined. The circumstances of all housing applicants are considered in accordance with this framework and they are then placed into one of five bands, according to need, in descending order of priority.
- 4.22 Although the Council is the largest registered provider of social housing in the District with circa 3,000 homes, there are a number of other housing associations which work in the area. Between them, these other social providers have stock totalling approximately 1,300 units in Mid Devon. Some of these organisations are relatively local, such as Falcon Rural Housing and Cornerstone, but others including the ones with the largest stock holdings in Mid Devon, such as LiveWest, Westward, Stonewater and Sovereign are regional and others such as Guinness Partnership which have a national presence.

#### Working with Private Sector landlords and agents

- 4.23 As stated, the Council is committed to working with private sector landlords to improve standards and to create more opportunities to rehouse those in greatest need. More on this engagement is provided in Chapter Three.

#### Devon County Council

- 4.24 The Council works closely with Devon County Council (DCC) across many work-streams and is keen to support the aims of the DCC Joint Strategic Approach to Supporting People to Live Independently in Devon 2020 to 2025.
- 4.25 At the time of developing this strategy, negotiations are ongoing relating to the devolvement of the budget for homelessness involving those aged 18+. If this is agreed, the Council should have an ability to spot purchase temporary accommodation and to commission floating support services using the funding from DCC. Such floating support could help to resettle vulnerable people into their own accommodation or help those at risk of homelessness to better sustain their tenancies.

#### Young People

- 4.26 As previously described, the Council is a signatory to the shared working protocol between the Devon District Councils and DCC designed to prevent homelessness

for 16 and 17 Year old people. This sets out an agreement relating to the assessment of 16 and 17 year old young people who present as homeless and who are in need of housing or housing-related support. In line with the Children Act 1989, DCC has responsibility for caring for those young people under the age of 18 who may become homeless.

- 4.27 The Council accepts grant funding from DCC to support work with young people and mediation is seen as an important tool with regard to helping those who may be homeless to reconnect with their families. This is important because there is a shortage of suitable accommodation for people under the age of 18 who become homeless. This is a consequence of a lack of emergency bed-spaces across the South West region generally. Unfortunately, if the individual has complex needs, the chances of DCC procuring suitable accommodation for them are likely to be slim.

#### Care leavers

- 4.28 We work in partnership with the DCC to support care leavers. Some of those leaving care may be especially vulnerable. The aim is to ensure that these clients can make the transition into independent living by providing accommodation suitable for their needs; and the support they require to acquire all the skills and knowledge required to enable them to sustain a tenancy.

#### Working with Central Government

- 4.29 The Council has worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver the work funded by the Rough Sleeper Initiative. We have also worked with MHCLG to extend the timescales associated with the retention of receipts arising from the sale of Council housing. We continue to engage informally with MHCLG and other central Government departments on a range of matters and more formally through opportunities to bid into specific grant funding for the benefit of our community.
- 4.30 Homes England, the government's housing accelerator, is a provider of funding support for housing-led development, including through its Home Building Fund (to private sector organisations) and Community Housing Fund. It can also provide advice to the Council and work in partnership to help bring forward housing schemes. The stated aim of the organisation is to help to improve neighbourhoods, and grow communities.



MDDC: A Council with a retained housing stock

- 4.31 As a social landlord (Mid Devon Housing), the Council is committed to a strong and diverse development programme and to making the most of any funding streams available to support our ambitions.
- 4.32 The Affordable Homes Programme provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable homes. From April 2021, Homes England has made £7.39 billion available to support delivery of up to 130,000 affordable homes across England but outside London. The target date for completion of these is March 2026. The delivery of new homes is to be undertaken in partnership by partners who undertake to focus on promoting the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), high quality sustainable design and working closely with local small to medium-sized enterprises (SME) house-builders.
- 4.33 The Council will endeavour to apply for funding with regard to any schemes which may be eligible. More on this is provided in Chapter One and specific objects within which will enable us to directly deliver greater new social housing.

Safeguarding

- 4.34 The Council has a safeguarding policy which is designed to ensure that any issues relating to the wellbeing of people in Mid Devon are reported to the appropriate agency. In order to discharge our duties relating to this area of work, all Officers receive training and are required to report any concerns about individuals or specific households noted during the course of their work.
- 4.35 As a result of this policy, our Officers will liaise with other teams within DCC including Care Direct which supports older adults to remain at home. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will coordinate work in cases where there is an immediate concern regarding the welfare of a child; and DCC can also provide advice in relation to the support of those with learning disabilities.
- 4.36 We also actively work with our tenants and residents to link into much wider support for vulnerable people, some examples of which are:
- General support and signposting - General Practitioners in the District and East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership
  - Mental health services - Devon Partnership NHS Trust
  - Substance misuse - Rise (Recovery and Integration Service) and Y-Smart Drug and Alcohol Services

- Early Help - East and Mid Devon Early Help Partnership. This is part of the Devon Children and Families Partnership offer and provides the support required to prevent more serious issues developing. Early Help brings together people from a range of services and teams who are committed to working with families to improve the situation for parents and children including those who may be adolescent. It can offer support to families prior to the birth of a child as well. In addition, it will provide help in cases where there may be a range of issues including parenting, employment and school attendance. The approach can also be used in cases where anti-social behaviour may be a factor or where there are issues relating to the emotional wellbeing of family members.

#### The Community Safety Partnership

4.37 The Council has a legal obligation to work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime, disorder, and the fear of crime locally, in order to improve quality of life and to create a safety living and working environment. The Council, working with East Devon, has established the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership (CSP). This meets on a quarterly basis to monitor and to oversee the work being delivered by partners in accordance with certain agreed priorities.

4.38 The membership of the CSP includes representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations as well as from the business sector. A number of partner agencies are involved in the Steering Group of the Partnership and these include:

- Devon and Cornwall Police
- Devon County Council
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service
- Dorset, Devon and Cornwall Probation
- The two local authorities; East and Mid Devon District Councils
- Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group

4.39 The CSP is part of the Safer Devon Partnership and also works with the Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum covering Exeter, East and Mid Devon.

#### MDDC: Working in partnership to support those experiencing financial hardship

4.40 The Council works closely with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) which is co-located at our main Phoenix House offices. The Neighbourhood Officers in our landlord Mid Devon Housing service have access to the online portal which facilitates communication with the DWP in connection with claims for Universal Credit. In addition, they communicate regularly with dedicated Liaison Officers whose role it is to assist social landlords to help their tenants to sustain their tenancies.

- 4.41 The Council provides grants to several local organisations to support core activities. Citizens Advice receives funding and is supported by the DWP to assist those experiencing financial hardship to make a claim for Universal Benefit. This is known as the Help to Claim service.
- 4.42 Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) also receives core funding from the Council. This supports work associated with assisting those who are homeless, the provision of debt and money advice and tenancy support activities.
- 4.43 At the time of developing this Strategy, CHAT was also contracted to work in partnership with the Council on a project to ensure that there is appropriate support available for residents in financial hardship. This new scheme will supplement the crisis and practical support provided by the Local Support Fund with Money and Debt Advice services for those clients for whom it is considered appropriate.
- 4.44 The Local Support Fund was established in response to the pandemic during April 2020. The aim was to provide emergency support to residents whose incomes had been affected by the pandemic and consequent lockdown. It provides emergency payments for food and other household essential, fuel, and the cost of access to services. The fund has been managed and administered jointly by CHAT and Navigate in partnership with the Council.
- 4.45 Finally, the Council have adopted a new Corporate Debt Recovery Policy which recognises the benefits of early engagement and support with those experiencing financial hardship and this is supported by a new dedicated full-time Customer Welfare Officer to directly support those in need of a wide range of support.

#### **Objective 40 – Actively engage in partnership working**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>How measured -</b> | <b>The number of partnership arrangements supported</b>  |
| <b>Target -</b>       | <b>At least two partnerships each year to assist housing provision in the district</b>             |
| <b>Source -</b>       | <b>Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 (core value of partnership to deliver outcomes and improvements)</b> |

# CONCLUSIONS

These four chapters do not sit in isolation – they are interlinked and underpin the vision of the Council for a greater choice of good quality homes which meets not just the needs but also the aspirations of all of our residents across our district so we can all grow and prosper. This is just the start of the journey, providing the direction and framework upon which to take our next steps. So what happens next and how will we ensure that the vision is turned into actions?

## Delivering the Housing Strategy

The delivery of the Housing Strategy for Mid Devon will be overseen by its Housing champion and portfolio holder (Cllr Bob Evans). The Council will also set up an informal, but dedicated Housing Strategy Delivery Group chaired by the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing and supported by our wider Corporate Management Team. Below this will be working groups for each chapter of the Housing Strategy. These working groups will be made up of housing, development and planning professionals and specialist partners from both inside and external to the Council. The purpose of the groups is to develop a more dedicated Action Plan around each priority outlined in this strategy and to oversee their delivery over the next five years. Where resources are not available, it will be the role of these groups to seek and secure additional resources where possible. The lead officers of each group will report progress made against the action plans and targets back to the Delivery Group, the Housing portfolio holder and to our partners and residents.

## Reviewing the strategy

In this fast paced world of frequent policy and legislative changes, the Housing Strategy will be reviewed annually and revised if required. The views of stakeholders and partners will be considered and used to influence the housing strategy and its direction of travel.

## Closing statement

We recognise the vital role housing plays both to the district and to its residents and that is why we are committed to growing and improving the quality of our housing and strengthening our communities. This strategy brings together the issues, future challenges and opportunities for us to deliver our ambitions. It will be a long and challenging journey, and must include and involve a wide range of partners and our communities to make it a success, but the rewards that stronger, better housing offers will make a significant difference to lives of our residents, their health, happiness and prosperity.