



Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2011–2016

Contents

Section One - Fourth update 2014/15	Page
Introduction	2
Informing the update	3
Achievements for the year 2014/15	4
Theme 1 New Housing Supply - Delivery	5
Theme 2 Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention	8
Theme 3 Meeting the Needs of Specific Groups	10
Theme 4 Developing Neighbourhoods and Housing Standards	11
Conclusion	14

Section Two **Review of progress against strategy Objectives 2011-2015**

Theme 1 New Housing Supply - Delivery	15
Theme 2 Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention	16
Theme 3 Meeting the Needs of Specific Groups	17
Theme 4 Developing Neighbourhoods and Housing Standards	18

Introduction

This is the fourth update of the 2011-16 Housing and Homelessness Strategy, the purpose of which is to review our progress in meeting our strategic objectives and record our achievements over the last four years. The aim of the strategy is to set out the council's approach to helping residents access good quality homes, which are affordable and appropriate to their needs.

As we are approaching the end of the 2011-16 strategy, we have included in Section Two, a review of our progress so far against our strategic objectives.

The strategy covers four key themes:

- Housing supply and the delivery of good quality housing
- Homelessness and homelessness prevention
- Housing to meet the needs of specific groups
- Neighbourhoods and housing standards

Previous strategy updates have highlighted the impact of changing government housing and welfare reform policies. This update explains how we are meeting the key objectives set in 2011. A new strategy will be produced for the period 2016-2021.



Informing the update

The update is informed by an evidence base made up of; The Housing and Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan - this is the working document of Rushmoor's Housing Team which is used to monitor progress on the delivery of a wide range of housing objectives delivered by the Housing Strategy & Enabling, Housing Options and the Private Sector Housing teams.

Data received from planning on open market housing completions and the affordable housing development programme set out details of the numbers, house types and mix of homes being delivered to meet housing need.

We maintain an open dialogue with a diverse range of stakeholders through forums such as:

- A bi annual Registered Provider Development Liaison Meeting, in partnership with Hart District Council, where we share best practice and update on development across the two local authority areas.
- A bi annual Registered Provider (RP) Liaison meeting focussed on tenancy and neighbourhood management.
- Quarterly Rushmoor Health and Wellbeing Partnership meetings where housing and health professionals come together to build understanding of a range of services and clear advice on how residents can access them.
- Annual forums with private landlords and providers of housing and homelessness services such as The Vine, CAB and Step by Step.
- Member-led Registered Provider Review meetings with up to six RPs each year, enabling members and officers to improve their understanding of issues impacting RPs as well as working together to resolve any issues and provide each other with an element of constructive feedback and accountability.
- Monthly briefing meetings with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- Update reports taken to the Housing Strategy Standing Group and Community, Policy and Review Panel.

Achievements for the year 2014/15

- During 2014/15, 361 new homes were delivered in the borough with 149 of these being affordable homes.
- Wellesley was awarded Planning Permission of the Year 2014. Work starts to deliver the first of 3850 new homes in Aldershot to include 1347 affordable homes.
- A capital budget of £204,000 is in place to support the delivery of new homes.
- Right to Buy receipts of £302,000 have supported the regeneration of North Town during the year.
- A new partnership with Oak Housing Association have enabled the conversion of an empty MOD building into 45 units of temporary accommodation, including two wheelchair accessible units funded in part by £500,000 of Home and Communities Agency (HCA) empty homes funding. A further seven empty homes across the borough were also brought back into use.
- The Existing Satisfactory Property Programme (ESPs) secured five additional family homes in partnership with Sentinel Housing Association.
- The use of local lettings plans have facilitated the freeing up of five family sized properties this year.
- New partnership working with Stoll and Haig Housing Association is allowing us to develop improved pathways into settled accommodation for armed forces veterans.
- We have secured 19 units of affordable housing for Rushmoor Residents at Sun Park, a cross-boundary scheme in partnership with Hart District Council.
- The Aldershot Winter Night Shelter, run by The Vine, achieved an Award for Excellent Practice by Housing Justice and helped 23 people access basic accommodation and support from November 2014 - March 2015.
- Disposal of a council-owned site to the charity Seeability provided a capital receipt of £150,000 to the Council with plans approved for the development of 12 units of specialist accommodation for people with visual impairment and learning disabilities.

New Housing Supply - Delivery

The number of homes delivered over the term of the strategy is as follows:

Year	Total housing	Open market housing	Affordable housing
2011/12	173	75	98
2012/13	250	91	159
2013/14	286	261	25
2014/15	361	212	149
Total	1070	639	431

With an annual total average of 268 homes completed per year and 108 of these being affordable homes in the borough, delivery has been reasonable in the context of a challenging housing and construction market. The target set at the beginning of the strategy period was an average of 150 affordable homes per year as recommended by Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2008.

The SHMA published in 2014 sets a new target of 197 affordable homes a year which seeks to address the under supply of the last few years in addition to newly forming housing need. Whilst the restrictions of land availability in the borough remains a challenge, the market conditions are improving and more development opportunities are starting to come through. Over the next 15-20 years, housing supply will be met through our strategic housing sites.

Strategic Site Updates

Queensgate

New homes continue to be built at Queensgate in Farnborough. Further planning permission was granted in 2014 for an additional 26 units, bringing the total to 425. The council and site owners, Inland PLC, are seeking to deliver a mix of house types and tenures as well as housing for sale there is a percentage of affordable housing producing 55 units for rent and 36 for shared ownership. To date, Radian has delivered 59 new, affordable homes on this site. In 2015/16, we expect a further nine shared ownership flats to be completed.



Wellesley

This is the beginning of a large, phased development of former military land of the southern part of the Aldershot Military Town with the first units expected to complete in September 2015.

A total of 3850 new homes are planned and will be delivered through a 17-year development programme which will provide a mix of house types and tenures including private sale, market rent, affordable rent and shared ownership. A total of 1347 affordable homes are expected to be delivered by 2030/31.

The council and its partners are working closely with Grainger Plc and Grainger Trust to ensure that Wellesley develops into a sustainable community that meets aspirations for the housing market as well as a range of housing needs for local residents.



North Town

The first two phases out of six are now completed. During the last financial year 135 units were delivered, the majority of which have been allocated to existing residents. Some households have chosen to settle off the estate and 11 units were made available to be advertised on the council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme during the year. North Town was one of the sites used by the National Housing Federation Homes for Britain Campaign in the run up to the General Election.



Decanting and demolition works are now underway to facilitate the regeneration of phases 3 & 4 which will deliver 133 homes by spring 2017.

Housing Affordability

Data published in the December 2014 SHMA, shows the average annual household income in Rushmoor as £25,100, significantly less than the neighbouring authorities of Hart, Surrey Heath and Waverley, all with average household incomes which exceed £30,000.

With earnings to house price ratio of 9:5 as at November 2014, Aldershot was quoted in a report by The Guardian to be the seventh least affordable town in the UK. We keep an open dialogue with RP partners on affordable rent levels for new developments, especially on the development on new larger family homes to ensure they do not exceed 35% of household income.

Further reduction to the benefit cap and expectations on housing association rent modelling announced in the July 2015 budget will undoubtedly have an impact on the types of affordable homes built in the future. The council will work closely with Registered Provider partners over the next few months to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact to their businesses and our residents.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Twenty percent of households in the private sector and social housing are overcrowded, lacking one or more bedrooms. Demographic trends to 2031 suggests the majority need to be for one, two and three bedroom homes, with around three quarters of the affordable housing requirement being for one and two bedroom homes, largely reinforcing the existing stock profile. The SHMA uses the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) formula for calculating objective housing need and concluded that a total of 470 homes per year need to be built for the next 20 years to meet housing demand in the borough. The council's draft Local Plan suggests that, whilst this is evidence of the numbers of new homes needed, restrictions on land availability means it is unlikely this will be achieved and capacity of 390 homes per year in total is more realistic.

Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention

Service Demand

The demand for the services provided by the Housing Options Team continues to increase as housing costs continue to rise and fewer households are able to access the private housing market either to rent or to buy.

There are currently 1198 households in the housing allocation pool with assessed housing need for affordable rented accommodation.

Despite strong competition for private accommodation the housing options team has secured 99 private rented tenancies for homeless households.

The team also delivered comprehensive advice to over 700 households on a range of housing related problems.

Supported and Temporary Housing

We are beginning to see the impact of cuts to Hampshire County Council Supporting People budgets with an increase in the number of people with complex needs coming to the council for advice and support.

At the beginning of the strategy period, it was evident that there was a need for more temporary accommodation in the borough. We have achieved 45 units at Clayton Court in partnership with Oak Housing Ltd and Grainger Plc, part funded by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). These homes are being let to households who would otherwise be placed into bed and breakfast accommodation and therefore offers a year on year saving to Rushmoor Borough Council of approximately £200,000. At the same time, families are provided with good quality, well-managed accommodation, gardens and with access to a range of support services. The scheme includes two fully wheelchair accessible units.

Supporting Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers

The Aldershot Winter Night Shelter provides basic accommodation, a hot meal and breakfast as well as the opportunity for guests to access healthcare and other support during the cold weather period. The Winter Night Shelter allows the council to meet its legal duty to street homeless people to provide accommodation under Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) in a supportive environment and with better housing and health outcomes for clients than can be achieved in bed and breakfast placements. Delivered by The Vine, the project was in the main staffed by local volunteers and provided support to 23 single homeless people from November 2014 - March 2015. Funding was secured from Rushmoor Borough Council, Hart District Council and Hampshire County Council Public Health Funding and food donations were made from local businesses. Housing Justice operate across the country supporting charities and churches to set up night shelters with volunteer training as well as advice on safeguarding, referral processes, policies and procedures. They presented the Aldershot Winter Night Shelter with an Award for Excellent Practice in February 2015.

We are working with The Vine to secure a sustainable funding stream to deliver the service next year. We are also working with seven other Hampshire local authorities utilising DCLG funding to provide specialist support to single vulnerable people through a programme of outreach and the development of multi-agency hubs.

Letting Agents and Property Managers Redress Schemes

We continue to work with the private sector which remains important in meeting housing need.

The Government introduced legislation in October 2014, which requires letting and managing agents to become members of one of three approved redress schemes. The Private Sector Housing Team are responsible for ensuring that all agents operating within Rushmoor are registered, so far 60% of Rushmoor's agents have confirmed membership, further work is being carried out to encourage the remaining 40% to comply with the scheme before any enforcement action is taken.

Meeting the Needs of Specific Groups

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

Last year we completed the accommodation assessment and followed this up with further consultation visits in 2015. The findings are that the internally generated demand for accommodation is low but there is a need to provide two plots for travelling show people. This is currently out to consultation in Rushmoor's Local Plan.

Black and Minority Ethnic

Our allocations policy ensures that affordable homes are allocated based on need. We work with private sector landlords and tenants to safeguard against landlord exploitation, overcrowding and unsafe housing conditions; we have worked with the Communities Team to ensure that those who do not speak English as a first language are aware of their housing rights and responsibilities. We have also worked with the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service to raise awareness of fire safety in the home for older Nepalese residents.

Older People

The SHMA has identified that the number of older people is increasing in the borough and wider housing market area and we are examining ways of addressing this through the adaptation of existing accommodation and increasing housing for over 55's and Extra Care provision.

First Wessex and Stonewater Housing Association (previously Raglan) have been converting manager flats at sheltered housing schemes into additional units of accommodation for over 55s. First Wessex delivered two units in a Farnborough scheme and Stonewater will deliver seven additional units in Aldershot, which include two converted manager flats.

Wheelchair Housing

A wheelchair accessible home makes independent living achievable for people who are wheelchair dependant. Opportunities to adapt homes have decreased with funding cuts so we have worked to mitigate the impact of this by maximising opportunities in the development programme. At Wellesley 10% of the affordable housing stock will be wheelchair accessible, a one bed flat, and a four-bed house to be delivered in the first phase next year. A fully adapted bungalow was completed at North Town this year and there are two disabled flats at the new temporary accommodation managed by Oak Housing Ltd. RP partners are looking at how proposed sites could be remodelled and funded to accommodate wheelchair units.

Armed Forces

Injured ex-armed forces and bereaved spouses receive priority for affordable housing through Rushmoor's Housing Allocation Scheme. Evidence provided by The Vine from the Winter Night Shelter shows that 25% of Rough Sleepers have previously served in the armed forces. We are working with specialist housing providers Stoll and Haig Homes to develop a clear housing pathway and increase housing stock designed to meet the needs of our veterans.

Developing Neighbourhoods and Housing Standards

Registered Provider Reviews

The purpose of the RP review process is to ensure residents receive a good quality service from their RP landlords.

A good working relationship with partners enables the council to work collaboratively in securing its affordable housing supply and to work together to prevent and resolve housing or neighbourhood problems. The RP Review process is member-led by a sub group of the Community Policy and Review Panel. Each year up to six RP's are invited to come in to share their approach to a number of issues including:

- Performance Management
- Quality of housing and development opportunities
- Customer Satisfaction
- Estate Management and Repairs
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Impact of Welfare Reform

This year we introduced neighbourhood visits prior to meeting with the RPs, which helped improved member and officer understanding of the context of each neighbourhood, allowing better and more informed discussion.

In 2014/15, the following RPs took part in the review process:

- Home Group (Stonham)
- Radian
- Sanctuary
- Hydemartlet

Officers have also worked with elected members, partners and the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) to improve the process of dealing with customer complaints made to members about RP service standards. Members now ensure that any complaints have been reported to the RP through the correct process and that they have had the opportunity to put things right before becoming involved in the complaint themselves or requesting officer involvement.

Housing Standards Review

The Coalition Government reviewed the technical standards to which new housing should be built, and consulted on a new set of streamlined standards. These standards were finalised and published in March 2015. They include a new national space standard setting out the minimum floor areas for a range of house types. These standards can be imposed by condition on a planning permission but only if the local authority has an appropriate Local Plan Policy in place. The draft Rushmoor Local Plan preferred approach seeks to impose space standards at level one of the National Space Standards.

The draft Rushmoor Local Plan also seeks to set more challenging technical standards on water efficiency. Other technical standards will be achieved through changes to the Building Regulations specifically:

- Optional Building Regulations requirements for access to homes - only where there is a local plan policy, evidenced by local need and subject to viability.
- A Security Standard
- Drainage and Waste Disposal

Housing Standards

The Private Sector Housing Team works with tenants and landlords to ensure housing standards within the existing housing stock are upheld. The team responds to complaints about housing standards, carries out enforcement action when needed and licenses Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). In the last year, 99% of all housing complaints were responded to within three days, five cases of enforcement action were taken and 16 mandatory HMO licences were issued.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's)

It is evident that, over the last five years the demand for privately rented accommodation in the borough has increased, reflecting changes in the housing market. HMOs offer many people good quality affordable accommodation. However, it is important that we do all we can to protect and educate vulnerable people from exploitation, overcrowding and the unsafe usage of their accommodation. There are currently 97 HMO's licenced in the borough. We are also aware of a further 228 HMO's that do not require a property licence but still require interventions to improve standards for fire safety, management and amenities. It is likely that there are other HMOs that we are not yet aware of so we are planning to carry out additional survey work to build an accurate picture.

Empty Homes

During 2014/15, Oak Housing Ltd secured £500,000 of HCA Empty Homes funding to deliver 45 units of temporary accommodation at Clayton Court in Aldershot. An additional seven empty homes were also brought back in to use through successful negotiations with the homeowners and without the need to pursue homeowners with enforcement action.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's)

We have spent £550,000 on providing 90 DFGs during 2014/15 and received 131 referrals from Occupational Therapists. We are signed up to a procurement framework agreement with the Eastern Shires Procurement Organisation for the provision of stair lifts, hoists, through floor lifts and step lifts which will result in expected savings of up to 25% on current costs.

Energy Efficiency

Over the last year, there has been a reduction of government funding on energy efficiency works and there are currently no schemes available to carry out loft and cavity wall insulation. We are still promoting replacement boilers for vulnerable people using discretionary grants. The response to the Green Deal scheme has been poor in Rushmoor and throughout the country, and we wait to hear about any new government initiatives.

Our home energy efficiency conservation report was submitted to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in April 2015 and is published on our website at the following link:

<http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/article/3841/Reducing-energy-use>

Links between Housing and Health

The council is linked to both Hampshire County Council's Adult and Child Services, both of which are now located at the council offices. Rushmoor's Housing and Environmental Health Services hold positions within the Rushmoor Health and Wellbeing Partnership, which delivers the Health Improvement Plan. Partnership members include local health care professionals and voluntary organisations such as Rushmoor Healthy Living and Rushmoor Voluntary Services.

Hampshire Public Health and Frimley Park Hospital's specialist tuberculosis nurse provided tuberculosis awareness training for housing and other front line staff in February 2015. Housing staff have provided "Eyes and Ears" training to healthcare professionals to help them understand the housing services that are provided by the council and how to identify and refer vulnerable clients who may need housing advice, are living in unsafe housing conditions or who need adaptations made to their homes.

Conclusion

There has been a shortfall of 169 new affordable homes during the term of the strategy which reflects a challenging national and local housing market, policy changes and significant cuts to both capital and support services. The supply of new affordable homes has been reasonable given this context, at this stage. However, it is unclear how we will be able to deliver new homes targets to meet housing need given the recently announced restrictions on the sector.

It is evident that the demand for all of the housing services has increased, and that the needs of more of our customers are complex. Continued and meaningful consultation will help us to establish the implications to our residents and business partners of the July 2015 budget in respect of the benefit cap reduction, Housing Association Rent Modelling and the Right to Buy.

Over the period of the next strategy it is likely that we will need to continue to ensure a strategic approach to the types of homes we develop and the services we provide to make sure that those in greatest housing need are able to access good quality, affordable housing.

The strategy objectives and delivery plan will be reviewed for the final time at the end of 2015-16.

Section Two

Review of progress against the Housing & Homelessness Strategy (2011-2016) objectives

This section shows how over the last four years the council has met the objective set out for the strategy in 2011.

THEME ONE

Make sure there is sufficient housing supply to meet needs

Total of 1070 new homes have been built 431 of which are affordable.

Deliver a mix of house types and tenures to reflect local need

35% affordable housing, 60:40 affordable rent to intermediate housing split delivered over the strategy period and RPs deliver on house size requirements and to lifetime homes.

Work to bring empty properties back into use

83 properties have been brought into use during the course of the 2011-2016 strategy to date and £500,000 of HCA funding has been invested.

Support the delivery of new housing at the Aldershot Urban Extension (Wellesley)

The scheme has started on site. The section 106 agreement secures delivery of 1347 affordable homes, the first of which are expected in September 2015.

Maintain a supply of new affordable housing

Our target of 150 affordable homes per year is not being achieved, however an average of 108 per year in a highly challenging economic environment is a fair outcome.

Encourage Innovation in funding for affordable housing

We set out a target of three schemes to be delivered using innovative funding models. RPs are increasingly developing homes for private sale to cross subsidise their affordable housing programme. First Wessex have successfully cross-subsidised development at North Town with outright sale and shared ownership, we have also used Right to Buy receipts to achieve delivery objectives at North Town. Oak Housing Ltd has used private finance, empty homes funding and the supported housing model to deliver Clayton Court. Public Health funding was used to secure a 10-bed space Winter Night Shelter provision, accessed by 51 people between January 2014 and March 2014.

Encourage the construction of high quality new affordable homes

North Town achieves Lifetime Homes and Sustainable Code Level 4 and Wellesley will deliver to Lifetime Homes with Grainger Plc committed to provide aspirational standards across all tenures.

THEME TWO

Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention

Between 500-700 households a year have been provided with advice and assistance to prevent homelessness over the strategy period, with 399 rent bonds being made to help people secure private rented accommodation. The Winter Night Shelter was launched to help those who have become homeless during the winter months. It has become increasingly challenging to prevent homelessness over the term of the strategy.

Make sure that social housing is provided to those most in need

The Housing Allocation Scheme has been reviewed to ensure it complies with the Localism Act 2011 and those in most need are prioritised. We set a target to house 100% of those in Band 1 within three months and this was achieved until 2013. However, over the strategy period this has reduced to 86% as a consequence of increased demand on the housing options service.

Make sure we provide temporary accommodation to meet need

We have found it difficult to find suitable accommodation over the strategy period and have had to accommodate 344 families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Since July 2015, Clayton Court provides 45 units of temporary accommodation in Aldershot which will reduce reliance on Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The challenge will be to ensure households are able to move on to settled accommodation quickly so the scheme retains its temporary provision purpose.

Provide Supported Accommodation to help people maintain and manage their housing

A multi-agency approach is in place to refer people for supported housing. At the beginning of the strategy period, we were reasonably well served with specialist accommodation and providers but the support is diminished due to Supporting People cuts. Despite this, positive outcomes have been achieved in the borough's community houses and supported accommodation through close partnership working.

Work with the private sector to improve the supply of private rented accommodation

We have developed the housing forum model for private sector landlords to build better relationships with them. Supply remains challenging, however RP's are looking to develop private market rented property portfolios.

Support Independent Living for older people

The council delivered an Older Persons Plan during the strategy period and is now working to support Hampshire County Council in the delivery of a County-wide plan. Over 55s accommodation has been provided at Alma House, North Town, Matinee House in Aldershot and Worcester Close, Farnborough.

Assist with meeting the housing needs of those leaving the armed forces

The Housing Allocation policy includes priority for armed forces and we are working to provide a housing pathway including dedicated new housing in partnership with Haig & Stoll Housing Associations.

Provide Housing Options advice for BME communities and to make sure that housing conditions meet the required standards

The housing options caseload is monitored quarterly and Nepali speaking customer advisors assist housing staff. A total of 98 immigration visits to private sector properties have been made over the strategy period to ensure good housing standards and housing staff have presented at community events to advise Nepali families on their housing rights and responsibilities.

Address the advice and accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

During the life of the strategy, the housing team has worked with the planning team on the accommodation needs of these communities, identifying the need for two plots for travelling show people, which is being addressed through the draft Local standards across all tenures.

Promote mixed, sustainable and safe communities

We have delivered new housing schemes that comply with our policy housing requirements set out in the Core Strategy. New scheme surveys carried out six months after people move in to their new homes evidence 92% of people are satisfied with their home and neighbourhood. Partnership working and good relationships with elected members through the RP Review process has helped the council to achieve good outcomes whenever problems arise.

Work with landlords and property owners to improve housing conditions

The Private Sector Housing Team has initiated regular landlord forums to improve relationships with private landlords in the borough and works with RPs where there have been issues relating to housing standards. They take a proactive approach to helping tenants with their housing problems and have responded to 99% of complaints on housing conditions within three days and taken 30 cases of enforcement action during the strategy period.

Improve Energy Efficiency and reduce Fuel Poverty

During the strategy period, 20 energy efficiency grants were made to vulnerable residents. Officers promoted free energy efficiency measures through Insulate Hampshire during 2011-13 and First Wessex have retrofitted 21 homes in Aldershot.

Funding for energy efficiency has been cut nationally, however the council has funded Rushmoor Healthy Living's Fuel Poverty Coordinator during the strategy period.

Explore the links between housing and health

Officers are represented at the Rushmoor Health and Wellbeing Partnership and the Hampshire Older Persons Wellbeing Group. We have secured public health funding to deliver the Winter Night Shelter, instigated tuberculosis awareness training for front line staff and arranged "Eyes and Ears" training to improve awareness of safeguarding and signposting to community nurses and care workers.

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