



HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-24

#RightForRugby

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FOREWARD

At Rugby Borough Council we have a clear vision for the borough, set out in our Corporate Strategy 2021-24 which is geared towards strategic outcomes for: climate; the economy; health and communities; and organisation. Housing has an integral part to play in each of these outcomes and so I am delighted to introduce the new Housing Strategy for the borough, which sets out the framework for our activities in addressing housing-related issues and needs to the end of 2024.

Our previous Housing Strategy was adopted in 2018 and despite the incredible difficulties and turbulence created by the Coronavirus pandemic, we were still able to make very substantial progress in addressing the priorities of that strategy and we highlight some of those achievements below. Nevertheless, more remains to be done, particularly in respect of homelessness and homelessness prevention. After all, a place to live is a basic human need and our vision is to ensure that all residents have affordable and warm housing in a safe and sustainable community leading to better health and well-being outcomes.

Over the lifetime of the strategy, we intend to work closely with statutory, voluntary and community organisations, partners and, most importantly, with local people to achieve our objectives. We have identified four priority themes to help us to reach our goals. These are:

1. To better understand the broad range of housing needs in the borough.
2. To increase the affordable housing supply available to meet needs, through new supply or making most effective use of existing housing stock.
3. To increase the quality and affordability of homes by improving the energy efficiency of our poorer performing housing stock and at the same time reducing carbon emissions.
4. To ensure that our new council housing developments are low carbon and make a positive contribution towards creating sustainable communities which we can be proud of now and in the future.

The strategy explains why we regard these as the priorities. It addresses each one in turn in more detail, setting out the data underpinning our approach, briefly describing some of the excellent work that is already underway and building logically to an action plan to be taken over the period of the strategy.

At the time of writing there are signs that the country is emerging from the pandemic, and while we must remain vigilant and in no way complacent, we can begin to look to the future with optimism. I am confident that this strategy will play a large part in improving the housing situation for the residents of the borough, delivering upon our corporate strategy and doing what is "Right For Rugby".



Emma Crane
Portfolio Holder for
Communities, Homes, Digital
and Communications and
Climate Change Champion



INTRODUCTION

This new Housing Strategy covers the years 2022 to 2024. It has four priority themes covering the most important housing issues in the borough at the present time and it consists of three chapters.

- The first chapter sets out the context for the strategy by providing a general background picture of the borough, explaining progress on tackling previous housing priorities and defining current major policy issues at national and local level. From this contextual information the chapter concludes by defining the four new priority themes that the strategy will seek to address.
- The second chapter then proceeds, theme by theme, explaining: the more specific context for each theme; projects already underway that will contribute towards addressing the goals in each theme; and the new actions that will be taken over the course of the strategy.
- The final chapter then explains some of the more “administrative” issues around the development and implementation of the strategy. It also introduces the formal, detailed action plan that is contained in Appendix One.

It sits alongside the Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 which sets out the broader development strategy for the growth of the district over that time period, with provision made for review. However, it should be stated that the Local Plan, because it is a statutory document, has precedence over the Housing Strategy in the unlikely event of any contradiction between the two.

It should be noted that whilst the Council has its own housing stock, this strategy addresses the wider housing needs and aspirations of the borough across all tenures not just Council housing.



CHAPTER ONE – THE CONTEXT FOR THE STRATEGY

1.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOROUGH

The borough of Rugby covers an area of 138 square miles located in central England, within the County of Warwickshire. The Borough is on the eastern edge of the West Midlands Region, bordering directly on to the counties of Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, both of which are in the East Midlands.

The borough has very strong strategic transport links with the rest of the country. The M6 runs east and west through the borough with junction one lying just to the north of the town of Rugby. The westbound route gives direct access to the wider West Midlands, the north-west and Scotland and indirect access via the M5 to Wales and the south-west. Meanwhile the M1 and A14 just to the east of the borough provide links east, north, south and to London and the south-east.

Warwickshire has a two-tier structure of local government so Rugby Borough Council (the Council) is the local housing authority while Warwickshire County Council is the social services authority.

The town of Rugby provides the main urban area of the borough, accommodating around two-thirds of the total population while the remainder live in the rural area, which has 41 parishes consisting of villages ranging in population size from 20 to 3,500 people.

After a long period of relative stability, the population of the borough began to grow over the decade from 2001 to 2011 by almost 15%. It has continued to grow since then to an estimated

108,900 in 2019 and is projected to be around 115,000 by 2031.

The age profile of the population of the borough is broadly similar to the county, regional and national picture, the most notable difference being a lower proportion of people in the 20 to 24 age range. More than a quarter of all households in the borough (28%) are single people while the average household size is 2.4 persons.

Chart 1 summarises where the 12% of the borough's residents born outside the UK originated from (source: Census data 2011):

% of population born outside the UK

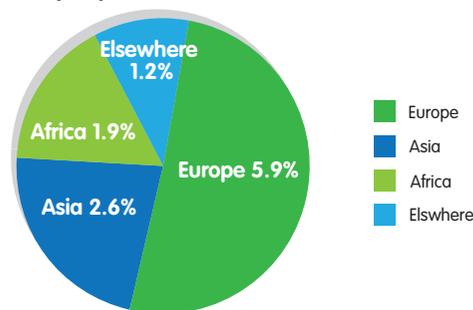


Chart 2 summarises the ethnic origin of nearly 16% of the population that is identified as other than White British (source: Census data 2011)

As regards housing, the borough accommodated a little over 47,000 dwellings as of 2019. At the 2011 Census, around 70% of these homes were owner-occupied, with the remainder split roughly equally between privately rented and affordable homes.

% of population other than white british

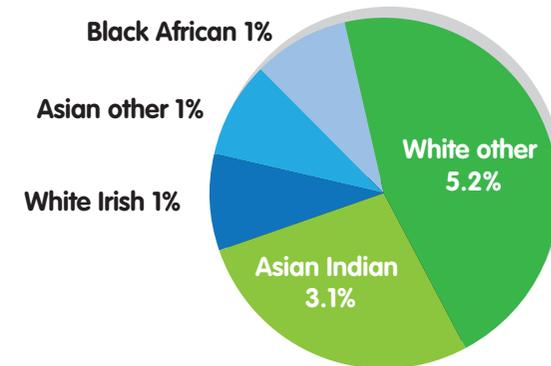


Table 1 Types of homes in the borough (source: Census data 2011)

Property Type	% of Homes
Semi-detached	34%
Detached	28%
Terraced homes	25%
Flats	13%

**Table 2 Size of properties in the borough
(source Census data 2011)**

Property size	% of Homes
Three bedrooms	44%
Two bedrooms	25%
Four or more bedrooms	23%
One bedroom	8%

In 2019, the median house price in Rugby was 8.68 times average earnings, which is higher than the West Midlands but similar to England as a whole. Renting in Rugby is relatively cheap compared to both Warwickshire and England as whole but slightly more expensive than the West Midlands.

The local economy is diverse, with the main sources of jobs by industry being:

Table 3 Jobs by industry

Industry	% of Population
Wholesale and Retail Trade;	
Repair of Motor Vehicles	14.6%
Transportation and Storage	12.5%
Professional, Scientific and	
Technical	9.4%
Education	9.4%
Manufacturing	9.4%
Human Health and Social Work	8.3%
Construction	6.2%

The percentage of employees in transport and storage, construction, professional, scientific and technical sectors is somewhat higher than regional and national averages. Human health and social work activities are lower than regional and national averages.

As a result of this range of sectors, unemployment in the borough is generally lower than regional and national averages while the average (mean) income for the borough is estimated to be around £47,600, with a median income of £36,100. However, the lower quartile income of all households is estimated to be £20,900.

The updated Indices of Multiple Deprivation published in June 2019 identified Rugby as being ranked 222 out of 326 Local Authorities (no.1 being most deprived, 326 the least).

According to the 2019 release of data, the following areas in Rugby Borough fall within the 20% most deprived super output areas in the UK:

- Brownsver South, Lake District North
- Overslade North West

The % of fuel poor households in Rugby is 10.3%, compared to a Warwickshire average of 10.1% (Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019).



1.2 PROGRESS ON DELIVERING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PREVIOUS HOUSING STRATEGY

The Council's previous Housing Strategy 2018-20 was adopted in 2018 and had 3 main priorities:

1. To help people to access a suitable high-quality home, that meets their needs, at a price they can afford.
2. To make best use of the borough's current and planned housing supply.
3. To help people to acquire the skills, information and support that they require to be self-reliant and achieve healthier outcomes.

Below is a summary of what has been achieved so far in meeting the priorities set out in the 2018-20 Housing Strategy, including:

- Improving our services to people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness by fully implementing the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and by referring over 350 households to the Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives (P.H.I.L.) project;
- Working with partners to develop a countywide Homelessness Strategy to secure coordinated joint working across statutory, voluntary and community organisations in Warwickshire in five key policy areas related to homelessness. These are: health; financial inclusion; young people; domestic abuse; and offending;
- Encouraging appropriate new housing developments by adopting a new Local Plan for the borough and introducing a new housing needs supplementary planning policy;
- Widening the options for increasing housing

supply by reviewing our approaches to house building, acquisitions, and tackling empty properties and by starting our own property development company;

- Enhancing neighbourhoods by commencing the redevelopment of a substantial property, Bell House, to provide 18 new flats and the redevelopment of multi-storey housing sites at Biart Place and Rounds Gardens;
- Ensuring that all of our property assets are effectively and strategically managed, by starting to develop a new 30-year business plan for our council housing and a new asset management strategy for the Council's wider property and land portfolio;
- Helping customers to access aids and adaptations in their homes by working with the countywide Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART);
- Developing opportunities for customers to access support from energy suppliers in respect of debt management issues through financial inclusion work;

Inevitably the Covid-19 pandemic was seriously disruptive towards the end of the strategy period and during 2020 and 2021 the main emphasis of the service has been to respond to the most urgent housing needs of service users, with a particular emphasis upon homelessness and rough sleeping.



1.3 THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

1.3.1 National housing priorities

The Housing Strategy needs to be set within the wider context of national government policies and legislation.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is the government department with principal responsibility for housing and homelessness. It “supports communities across the UK to thrive, making them great places to live and work” and its work “includes investing in local areas to drive growth and create jobs, delivering the homes our country needs, supporting our community and faith groups, and overseeing local government, planning and building safety.”

The main government policies that will influence and impact on the development and delivery of the Housing Strategy are summarised briefly in the following paragraphs.

The climate emergency

In 2019 the UK Parliament passed an extraordinary measure: a national declaration of an environment and climate emergency. The UK was the first national Parliament to declare such an emergency and the decision marks a renewed sense of urgency in tackling climate change. The UK is now legally committed to achieve net zero by 2050 - a 100% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 (relative to their 1990 levels) and was recently recognised as one of just 18 developed economies that have driven down CO2 emissions over the last decade.

In October 2021 the government published the Net Zero Strategy “Build Back Greener”, setting out its plans for achieving this target.

This is also relevant on a local level as Rugby Borough Council itself declared a climate emergency with a goal of being net zero by 2030. Homes are one of the major sources of UK carbon emissions and there is an increasing need to ensure that all homes in the Borough can become more energy efficient and ultimately transition to more sustainable sources of energy. This will require significant investment in homes in the coming years on a range of building components, such as the installation of heat pumps, more energy efficient windows, loft and cavity wall insulation, and vehicle charging points among others.

The “Levelling Up” agenda

A key government policy, emanating from the Conservative Party’s 2019 manifesto, is that of levelling up. The manifesto pledged “to use our post-Brexit freedoms to build prosperity and strengthen and level up every part of the country”. From early in 2020 the focus of central government was diverted towards tackling the emerging Coronavirus pandemic but it has nevertheless re-stated a commitment to the policy and, in fact, sees this as even more critical to rebuilding the country in the aftermath of the pandemic.

A Levelling Up Fund was announced in the Spending Review providing £4.8 billion of investment to “support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets.” Local authorities were allocated to a priority category, one, two or three; tier one being the highest priority. Rugby is in priority three.



The White Paper “Levelling Up the United Kingdom” was published on 2nd February 2022 and sets out further details as to how this policy will be taken forward. This does include likely reforms to the planning system which may have implications for the Housing Strategy.

House building targets

In 2017, the Government set out an ambition “to put England on track to deliver 300,000 new homes a year.” This was firmed up by the new Government of December 2019 in a manifesto pledge to “continue our progress towards our target of 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s. This will see us build at least a million more homes, of all tenures, over the next Parliament.” This continued focus upon addressing the under-supply of new homes through a range of measures, not least planning reform, will feed through to the local level and should provide opportunities to increase supply locally where needed.

Support for home ownership and shared ownership

A recurring theme of national housing policy for many years has been a commitment to support people into home ownership, whether outright or through shared ownership and similar schemes. The Government has several different mechanisms to help people to get onto the property ladder, including older methods such as the Right to Buy, Help To Buy and shared ownership and newer schemes such as First Homes. There is now a new model for shared ownership on new-build homes delivered through the Affordable Homes

Programme 2021-26. This allows initial equity stakes to be purchased for as low as 10% of the market value, with increased flexibility on acquiring additional equity stakes.

Homelessness and rough sleeping

The current government remains committed to measures to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. The predecessor 2017 government set targets to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it by 2027, supported by the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018, while a 2019 manifesto commitment brought the eradication target forward to “the end of the next Parliament”. When the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in 2020 the government announced and funded an “Everyone In” strategy for those that were rough sleeping. The worked with local authorities to ensure that they could “bring in those on the streets to protect their health and stop wider transmission, particularly in hot spot areas, and those in assessment centres and shelters that are unable to comply with social distancing advice”. This had a significant temporary effect upon rough sleeping numbers but, at the time of writing a successor policy, as Everyone In winds down, has not been produced.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper

Whilst the housing white paper remains that, and is yet to be enshrined in law, it is pertinent to the current work of social housing landlords and illustrates good practice in terms of demonstrating accountability to tenants.

Much of the White Paper was prompted by the Grenfell tragedy and concerns that the tenant management organisation at Kensington and Chelsea had failed to adequately listen to their tenants when they raised concerns about their homes. In addition, the paper seeks to increase safety of homes and address issues of stigma within social housing.



1.3.2 LOCAL POLICY PRIORITIES

Locally, policy direction is driven by the Council's Corporate Strategy 2021-24 which sets out the strategic vision for the council in the form of 4 priority outcomes with specific targets for each outcome. While the targets cover the whole of the Council's activities, some of them are relevant to housing and therefore set the direction for the priority themes for the Housing Strategy. These are as follows.

Climate outcome:

Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Housing-related targets:

- Reducing the carbon footprint of our Council housing stock by 2027.
- Build environmentally sustainable homes, including within our own housing stock.

Economy outcome:

Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents.

Housing-related target:

- Regenerate neighbourhoods that need support and build communities that sustain change.

Health and Communities outcome:

Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected.

Housing-related targets:

- Making sure that our communities are safe.
- Making sure that residents are proud of their community and their borough.
- Support residents who are, or are at risk of being, homeless or sleeping rough.
- Make sure that residents of Rugby have access to high quality, affordable and environmentally sustainable homes.

Organisation outcome:

Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation.

Housing-related targets:

- Set robust, comprehensive and achievable budgets, exploring all avenues of income to meet our financial targets.
- Undertake commercial activities in the open market where it is sustainable and responsible to do so.



1.4 NEW STRATEGIC PRIORITY THEMES

Having considered the progress made since the 2018 Housing Strategy was adopted, alongside the changed policy direction indicated by the Corporate Strategy and by the new government agenda, we believe that our actions on housing should be directed towards the following four priority themes:

1. To better understand the broad range of housing needs in the borough.
2. To increase the affordable housing supply available to meet needs, through new supply or making most effective use of existing housing stock.
3. To increase the quality and affordability of homes by improving the energy efficiency of our poorer performing housing stock and at the same time reducing carbon emissions.
4. To ensure that our new council housing developments are low carbon and make a positive contribution towards creating sustainable communities which we can be proud of now and in the future.

The remainder of the strategy will explain what we propose to do to address each of these themes.



CHAPTER TWO – STRATEGIC THEMES

This chapter will take each theme in turn and set out:

- Our current understanding of the relevant housing issues, including any key data;
- Any existing work that will help to address the theme; and
- What actions we propose to take over the course of this new strategy.

2.1 THEME ONE

To better understand the broad range of housing needs in the borough

We commissioned consultants to carry out an interim Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) for the borough and received the final report in May 2021. This has provided us with a robust understanding of current local needs upon which we can base the actions in this strategy. However, there are four very important caveats to this which mean that gaining a better understanding of housing needs remains a key strategic theme.

1. The most accurate data on population and demography can only be gained by a full census of the population. These are carried out every ten years. The currently available Census dates from 2011 and is therefore now at its most outdated. In between censuses projections and best estimates have to be “bolted on” to the previous Census data.
2. The new Census was carried out in 2021 and the results will be released in phases over the

next couple of years so it will be extremely important to revisit our understanding of housing needs in light of the new information as it becomes available.

3. Local planning policies need to take account of sub-regional as well as local assessments and economic as well as housing needs in order to facilitate cross-border working to address housing and other needs at a strategic level. The Council, in conjunction with other authorities has commissioned a new Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), due for publication in Summer 2022, This will update our understanding of housing needs, using a methodology which is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework
4. “Housing needs” should be understood to encompass more than just the requirement for more affordable housing. It also requires an understanding of the broader context of other housing policy areas/strategies, such as homelessness and financial inclusion and wider customer expectations and observations on housing that may be gleaned from engagement and profiling.
5. The pandemic has created a number of significant impacts upon housing needs, some of which may not yet be apparent and could emerge over the short to medium term.

Consequently, information gathered, and actions taken forward, through the emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, Financial Inclusion and Customer Engagement Strategies will all help us to build a greater understanding of housing needs in the broadest sense of the term.



THEME ONE ACTION LIST

In furtherance of this theme, the following actions will be taken forward from this strategy as projects in the action plan:

- Develop and implement a new Rugby Borough Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy;
- Review our approach to the provision of temporary accommodation;
- Review the housing allocations policy with a view to improving access to the waiting list for those in housing need
- Carry out a comprehensive review of the Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives (PHIL) project to ensure a continued demonstration of value for money and to identify any alternative delivery/funding models;
- Review the contracts for advice and support services, including those with Citizens' Advice Bureau and Warwickshire Community And Voluntary Action as part of a proposed review of corporate support for the wider voluntary and community sector;
- Develop a borough wide Financial Inclusion Strategy;
- Increase our accountability to council tenants by increasing the opportunities for them to have a say about the council's housing service and its performance
- Increase our understanding of the need for low-cost home-ownership and identify how meeting this need can be potentially enabled;
- Revise and update our understanding of housing needs as Census 2021 data becomes available, through our participation in the development of a new sub-regional HEDNA.



2.2 THEME TWO

To increase the affordable housing supply available to meet needs, through new supply or making most effective use of existing housing stock.

While we await new data from emerging work on Theme One, the HEDNA and the results of the LHNA demonstrate an acute continuing need to increase affordable housing supply and this enables us to continue to address this need in the meantime. The key findings of the LHNA are indicative only, with the HEDNA being the superior data source:

- There is a continued need for more affordable homes (rented and affordable home ownership), within the borough.
- Access to the owner-occupier sector is restricted, not just by high price-to-earnings ratios but also by access to capital and mortgage lending restrictions.
- The government's new First Homes scheme will require discounts of 30%.
- For affordable housing secured through planning agreements, in tenure terms 70% of the need is for Social or Affordable Rent and 30% is for intermediate housing options, including but not exclusively shared-ownership
- Social and Affordable Rent levels should be set at no more than the Local Housing Allowance rate to ensure affordability for local households; and Social Rent is to be encouraged over Affordable Rent where feasible.
- The recommended mix of affordable housing types required is as per the following table (subject to update when the HEDNA has been completed) iv illustrated in table 4

Table 4 Affordable homes by size and type

	One-bed (%)	Two-bed (%)	Three-bed (%)	Four-bed (%)
Market	5	25	45	25
Affordable home ownership	15	40	35	10
Affordable housing (rented)	30	35	25	10

The study notes that the population is ageing and for the period from 2020 to 2031 it projects:

- A 23% increase in the population aged 65 or more (potentially accounting for over a third of total population growth);
- A need for around 730 homes with support (sheltered/retirement housing) in the market sector;
- A need for around 430 additional homes with care (e.g. extra-care), around a quarter in the affordable sector; and
- A need for additional care bed spaces.- bedrooms 4+-bedrooms

The study also evidences a clear need to increase the supply of accessible and adaptable dwellings and wheelchair user dwellings.

The Local Plan

The Local Plan was adopted in June 2019 and seeks to deliver 12,400 additional homes in the 2011-31 period. Between 2011 and 2020 a total of 4,792 homes were provided leaving 7,608 to be

completed in the remainder of the plan period (an average of 692 per annum).

The plan sets out our local planning policies and identifies how land is to be used, determining what will be built and where. It seeks 20% affordable homes on previously developed land and 30% affordable homes on "greenfield" land, on all sites of at least 0.36 hectares in size or capable of accommodating 11 dwellings or more. (Affordable housing delivered in this manner is colloquially known as s106 housing.)

It should be noted that where Shared Ownership Homes are delivered in rural areas, subject to classification as a Designated Protected Area, the Council will not routinely consider awarding a waiver permitting staircasing to 100%. This applies to homes delivered on former open countryside or greenbelt sites. The staircasing will instead be limited to 80% to ensure these homes remain affordable homes in perpetuity.

Acquisitions Policy

The Council adopted a Housing Asset Acquisition & Disposal Policy in 2017, which was reviewed in November 2020. It confirms that we are committed to delivering, increasing, managing and maintaining the supply of quality affordable housing for residents in the borough. The objectives of the policy are:

- To increase the supply of additional suitable affordable housing and temporary accommodation owned and managed by the Council, recognising the increasing demand on the housing waiting list, whilst providing an opportunity to re-balance the mix of housing owned by the authority.
- To facilitate the acquisition of property/assets that will assist in the delivery of identified and potential new build opportunities.

The policy looks at a number of methods to increase stock levels, guided by current housing need. Options include purchasing affordable housing built by developers under planning requirements on large sites; open market purchases; and buying back properties sold under the Right To Buy scheme.

The target was to acquire a minimum of 12 properties per year and to date we have acquired 112, exceeding this target by 133%.

Moving forward the option to buy new-build properties will be considered and greater focus will be upon one and two bedroom properties, as well as larger family homes and homes that support a specific need, for example level access family homes.

Council Property Development Company

The Council has agreed to set up a commercial company structure, the company being Caldecott Development with a holding company, Caldecott Group, under which a number of specialist trading companies will operate. A shareholders' committee will have delegated authority to manage the trading entities and provide governance to the council.

Within this structure the Council has approved the formation of a Joint Venture Property Development Company to deliver additional homes where the private sector is unable so to do.

The partner in this venture is the Norse Group which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Norfolk County Council. Norse has wide ranging experience and a successful background in delivering homes through this type of structure around the country.

It is anticipated that the joint venture will deliver around 50 new homes in phase one of its development plan over the next five years, focussing on unused small parcels of land held by the Council, for example, garage sites.



Making best use of existing stock

In addition to building/acquiring properties, housing needs can also be met by ensuring that existing homes are put to best use. Methods for doing this that will be deployed during the period of this strategy are:

- Re-designating existing stock. There are some housing complexes where access has been limited to specific client groups but for which demand from that group is low. In those cases, it makes sense to consider carefully and sensitively, in consultation with the existing tenants of the respective complexes, whether to remove restrictions and allow other client groups to apply for vacancies in those complexes.
- Developing new homes on our former high-rise sites, with a focus on the delivery of quality, low carbon, energy efficient affordable homes and the creation of sustainable communities.
- Adapting homes, including the use of Disabled Facilities Grants. These options can help to address the needs of people with disabilities while enabling them to remain in their existing home. They may, for example, involve adapting a property to include items such as a level access shower or wheelchair ramp rather than the occupier having to move to a property that has such facilities.
- Improving our methods of allocating affordable homes, including considering the potential for a choice-based system.
- Looking to introduce a scheme, utilising a digital platform, to facilitate and empower tenants to more easily access opportunities to meet their needs by exchanging their home with another tenant.

THEME TWO ACTION LIST

In furtherance of this theme, the following actions will be taken forward from this strategy as projects in the action plan:

- Review our approach to Council house building and property acquisitions (including s106 opportunities) to increase the Council housing portfolio;
- Develop and implement a new business plan to fund the key investment priorities for council housing for the next 30 years, including new house building and acquisitions;
- Continue to progress the new development company and monitor its outputs;
- Review our approach to the re-designation of the Council's existing stock, where it is appropriate to do so
- Consider how we can better work with partners to make best use of disability-adapted and larger social-housing units;
- Review the affordability and accessibility of extra-care housing in Rugby for those in housing need;
- Assess the impact of the HEART scheme in helping customers to access aids and adaptations in their homes;
- Create a mechanism for letting out homes on new Council housing developments to ensure the creation of sustainable communities
- Review our nomination agreements to ensure they are fit for purpose.

2.3 THEME THREE

To increase the quality and affordability of homes by improving the energy efficiency of our poorer performing housing stock and at the same time reducing carbon emissions

This theme is becoming increasingly important, following the Council's announcement of a Climate Emergency and targets to become net zero by 2030. On the more individual level, making a home more energy efficient assists with the affordability of household bills, and has more wide-reaching effects on health and wellbeing. The emerging Council Climate Strategy will contain a number of housing related actions which will feed into the Housing Strategy Action Plan – ensuring synergy between the two.

There are a number of housing issues that coalesce within this theme, including poor property conditions, unsuitable housing, energy inefficiency, fuel poverty and financial inclusion. For instance:

- There are currently well over 2,000 households in unsuitable accommodation in the borough according to the LHNA. Rehousing is not always the most appropriate solution for residents in unsuitable accommodation: there are many reasons why an existing home may be unsuitable and the occupiers may be owner occupiers who would be unable to join the housing list.
- There are significant amounts of pre-1919 terraced housing among the private rented housing stock in the borough, which are notoriously hard to heat and not energy efficient.
- In the Council housing stock, there are five different types of non-traditional properties,

592 homes in all, which are not built of brick and block work. These properties are generally harder to heat thus contributing to fuel poverty.

- The % of fuel poor households in Rugby is 10.3%, compared to a Warwickshire average of 10.1% (Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019).

The approach to this theme needs to be largely oriented around tenure to some extent because there are different legislative regimes and policy levers available to the Council in each sector. On that basis:

- Private Registered Provider landlords (a.k.a. housing associations) operate under a regulatory framework that obliges them to maintain and improve their homes to a good standard and local authority oversight is not considered necessary so we do not propose any specific actions towards that sector at this time.
- Owner-occupiers are also, for the most part, expected to make arrangements for the upkeep of their own homes. While the Council does have some powers that can, and will when appropriate, be deployed in individual cases. That said, the action plan supporting this strategy does reflect an ambition to work more closely with the private sector to see how energy efficiency measures can be more strategically be implemented in the private sector. This leaves the private rented sector, where we have a regulatory role set out in legislation, and the Council housing sector, for which we have direct responsibility as the owner/landlord, as the focus for this strategy.

Private rented sector

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced a number of measures to reform the private rented sector in England and further measures have followed or are planned. The broad focus of government policy has been to tackle rogue landlords, address unfair practices by letting agents and improve property standards and management in the sector.

Our vision is to ensure that all residents have affordable and warm housing in a safe community whilst promoting health and well-being. In order to achieve this, our aim is to reduce the number of non-decent homes in the private rented sector through the following methods:

- Focussing resources on high risk cases and taking an “information-only” approach to low risk cases in the first instance to enable tenants and landlords to resolve issues themselves.
- Using enforcement powers effectively and efficiently with all high risk cases, minimising the time and resource required to resolve a case.
- Improving residents’ knowledge and understanding of tenants’ rights and landlords’ obligations regarding property condition.
- Ensuring all properties in a landlord’s portfolio meet the required property standard.
- Where health issues are impacting on the condition of the property and the tenant’s wellbeing, ensuring that the tenant is referred to any support they need to address those issues.
- Looking at the possibility of a Landlords’ Forum to inform and support policy development.

The above methods apply equally to our licensed mobile home sites too (including caravan sites, park homes, static, touring and pods). Council housing

For any landlord seeking to proactively maintain its housing stock, reliable data is clearly an extremely important pre-requisite. We will review our approach to collecting, analysing and interpreting data to inform our plans for the future maintenance and investment in our housing stock.

The Council’s Asset Management Strategy 2018-23 sets out the Council’s approach to all of its property assets including housing. The strategy is intended to help optimise the deployment and utilisation of land, buildings and other assets to support delivery of front-line services. The strategy will be updated during the lifetime of this Housing Strategy.

The funding of improvements to the Council’s housing assets is identified through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and together these then feed into the capital programme for the coming years. As has already been identified in the actions for Theme Two, a new HRA Business Plan is to be produced in the near future. Taken together those two new documents, informed by the new stock condition survey, will drive the programme of housing improvements for the coming years.

In the interim, there are a number of initiatives that will be taking place:

Consultants have produced a revised Carbon Management Plan for our housing and non-housing assets and to advise on how we may

address the climate emergency declaration. There will be clear links between the Housing Strategy Action plan, the Asset Management Strategy, the emerging Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Climate Change Strategy and Action plan.

All will set out a vision as to how we will move away from reliance on fossil fuels.

Parity Projects, a consultancy that specialises in modelling options to improve the energy and carbon performance of housing has been engaged to support improvements to the council’s housing stock. They are carrying out an audit of the energy performance of each of our homes and then preparing a plan of what works need to be carried out to first improve energy efficiency and then retrofit each property – along with cost estimates for doing this.

- We plan, through the existing capital programme to install 773 Worcester Bosch High Efficiency boilers over the next 18 months to address a specific issue we have with early failing boilers and those that are required to meet decent homes standards.
- We have received central government funding under its Local Authority Delivery Scheme of £507,000 which we have supplemented with £232,000 of our resources. The scheme aims to harness local and regional expertise to identify households that are most likely to be in fuel poverty and which would best benefit from energy efficiency upgrades. We will target 90 Council properties that meet the eligibility criteria for improvements.

- In April 2017 the government introduced the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) which required energy companies to fund energy efficiency measures into eligible people's properties. Three rounds of funding have so far taken place. Phase four is being finalised at the time of writing and will be launched in 2022 so details are not available as yet.
- We have submitted a bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for £625k towards measures for an additional 47 properties. At the time of writing a decision was still pending.

Financial Inclusion Strategy

The new Financial Inclusion Strategy will consider how best to support residents across tenures. It will target activities to support those who are looking for work and those who need assistance/ advice with money management, debt advice and new skills.

The strategy will aid in addressing the issues raised within this theme because it enables referrals of people who are struggling to afford to heat their homes to energy suppliers who will in turn be able to provide debt management advice.

THEME THREE ACTION LIST

In furtherance of this theme, the following actions will be taken forward from this strategy as projects in the action plan:

- Develop an approach to enabling energy efficiency improvements in private sector housing;
- Review our approach to collecting, analysing and interpreting data to inform our plans for the future maintenance and investment in our housing stock;
- Update the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Delivery Plan;
- Devise a new fully-funded improvement programme for Council housing by preparing a new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan;
- Begin planning for the 2025 "no gas boiler" deadline to contribute to the achievement of our net zero by 2030 target;
- Develop and implement a Carbon Management Plan and energy efficiency and retrofit strategy for Council housing;
- Introduce the new Technology Forge Asset Management System;
- Undertake a strategic review of the Property Repairs Service and Implementation Plan;
- Develop opportunities for customers to access support from energy suppliers in respect of debt management issues;
- Design out service charges in new housing developments wherever possible.

2.4 THEME FOUR

To ensure that our new Council housing developments are low carbon and make a positive contribution towards creating sustainable communities which we can be proud of now and in the future.

The final priority theme for this strategy concerns situations where multiple properties, estates or communities are undergoing improvement and redevelopment so that an area-wide approach is required. In such projects it is essential that the newly emerging community is sustainable to ensure that it thrives and has longevity. This can be achieved with quality placemaking being at the heart of design principles from project concept. Three projects of this nature are already underway in the borough so this theme relates principally to ensuring that they are successful, but also that learning from them is captured and deployed in future projects.

The Biart Place Project

Biart Place consisted of 2 high-rise blocks of flats along with surrounding low-rise flats and a garage site. Survey work undertaken led to concerns being raised about both the structural integrity and fire compartmentalisation performance of the high-rise blocks.

Consequently, the Council deemed the properties moribund and took the decision to rehouse the existing tenants in preparation for demolition. It subsequently decided to include the other flats and the garage site in the project to create a wider footprint for a new housing development. At the time of writing, all tenants have been

relocated and demolition of the buildings is complete. Talks are ongoing to decide what the next steps should be, in terms of the new homes. However, in line with its eco aspirations, the new development will not have gas, and instead will look to utilise new technologies including solar and air source heat pumps. In addition, the new homes will be built to Part L of the revised Building Control standards – which require higher levels of energy efficiency. All of these demonstrate our commitment to achieving net zero by 2030 and ensuring that our tenants have energy efficient homes that they are better able to afford to heat.

The Rounds Gardens project

Rounds Gardens comprises 3 high-rise blocks located close to the town centre. The high-rise blocks have been rendered moribund due to similar issues to those identified at Biart Place. The development will incorporate a further 32 flats, built around adjacent to the high-rise blocks, to permit a wider development project.

Architects are currently developing options for the delivery of affordable homes on the site.

Taken together Biart Place and Rounds Gardens are substantial redevelopment projects for the borough and provide a unique opportunity to create new sustainable communities benefitting from high-quality Council housing that is affordable to heat and more in keeping with modern-day needs.

Bell House

Bell House is a very different project. It is a former residential home, a substantial property that had been empty since 2009 and was acquired by the Council. With funding from Homes England, the site has been regenerated, providing an extra 18 properties comprising of 13 one-bedroom and five two-bedroom flats. Tenants are set to move into the new block in early 2022.

Achieving sustainability for our communities

One way to build sustainability in the community is to apply a Local Lettings Plan to the housing allocations for the new homes. Such a policy can differ from the mainstream allocations policy in various ways, for example:

- Giving priority to people that want to live in the area;
- allocating properties to applicants in non-priority groups;
- allowing under-occupation to promote longer term tenancies, reduce child-density and account for future family growth by reducing the need for future transfers.

Applying Local Lettings Plans in new housing development or redevelopment projects would also ensure that we are meeting a wider range of housing needs which fits in with Theme Two. Thought will also need to be given to how the new communities on these sites will be supported to identify as a community rather than individual households, for example through being encouraged to develop community growing projects.

THEME FOUR ACTION LIST

In furtherance of this theme, the following actions will be taken forward from this strategy as projects in the action plan:

- Develop and adopt a Community Development Strategy for the new developments at Rounds Gardens and Biart Place
- Develop a local lettings plan for the new homes at Biart Place and Rounds Gardens to help create sustainable and communities
- Consider the potential for affordable housing delivery as part of the emerging plans for the regeneration of the Town Centre.



CHAPTER THREE – STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter sets out the “administrative” arrangements in developing the Housing Strategy and how its activities will be taken forward and monitored over the next two years.

3.1 CONSULTATION

We carried out a 4 week consultation with our main stakeholders in June 2021, in which we set out our main ambition and the proposed strategic themes. Consultees were asked to have a look at these, let us know whether they agreed with them or not and also give us any suggestions for alternatives.

In the event, the consultees were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposals put forward.

3.2 RESOURCES

All of our existing housing services and ongoing projects are fully funded through the Council’s base budgets for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital programme. These budgets are reviewed annually during the budget-setting process.

The costs of running the council housing service are not funded by the local taxpayer. Instead, there is a strictly ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), into which the rents, of approximately £16M per year are paid into. The HRA funds the management, repairs, improvements and additions of the Council’s housing stock. The HRA also has a major repairs reserve fund and

capital investment balances built up from revenue contributions set aside over the years to pay for new build, estate redevelopment and other works. New for 2022/23 is a climate change reserve fund of £1M. Future investment requirements for the decarbonisation / net zero agenda will be identified and set out as part of the action plan commitment to develop a new Housing Revenue Account business plan.

Additional internal funding for new project proposals may either be considered through the budget process or, where they occur in a “windfall” fashion, will be considered by the Council on a case-by-case basis.

Central government, on occasion, provides specific funding for the implementation of projects related to their policy agenda, such as for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Everyone In initiative to accommodate rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Opportunities also occur from time to time to bid for external funding and these are actively pursued, principally for programmes being promoted and grant-funded by central government. Some examples of these schemes have already been mentioned earlier in the strategy, such as the Local Authority Delivery Scheme, the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Partnership working with other local organisations

sometimes secures additional funding too. For example, resources were pooled with Warwickshire County Council and the other district and borough councils to develop the joint homelessness strategy while financial support was provided by Homes England towards the Bell House project.

In most cases specific funding for an action set out in the action plan will derive from one or more of the above and will be identified closer to the inception of the project so as to ensure that it is the most appropriate and financially prudent and advantageous to the Council at that time.

3.3 ACTION PLAN

The action plan is set out in Appendix One to the strategy and sets out further details about the actions identified under each theme earlier in the strategy, including who will be responsible for direct management of the action and when it take place.

3.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The action plan, in appendix 1, sets out the direction of travel for delivering against the priority outcomes and will evolve as:

- the delivery of some actions will generate further sub actions.
- new legislative and regulatory requirements, arising during the lifetime of the strategy will require the addition of new actions, for example the new Decent Homes Standard.

It is with the above in mind that the action plan is currently front loaded to delivering actions for 2022 and 2023.

The actions arising from the action plan will filter into the service plans for the relevant teams assigned to deliver on them. This ensures a golden thread from corporate strategy to housing strategy, service plans and individual officer one-to-one and team meetings.

3.5 MONITORING AND OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Chief Officer for Communities and Homes will oversee the delivery of the action plan and will report back at regular intervals to both the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homes and the Leadership Team, through their dedicated project board.

There is a regulatory requirement for the Council to produce an annual report to tenants, as part of their landlord function. The implementation of relevant actions from the plan will form part of this report.

Appendix One – Housing Strategy 2022-2024 Action Plan

Theme One - To better understand cross tenure housing needs in the borough.

	What we will do	When	Lead officer
1.1	Revise and update our understanding of housing needs, including housing for older persons and people with disabilities, as Census 2021 data becomes available, through our participation in the development of a new sub-regional HEDNA	30 Sept 2022	Development Strategy Manager
1.2	Assess the potential housing policy implications arising from the findings of the new HEDNA	31 Dec 2022	Chief Officer (Communities and Homes)
1.3	Implement a new Rugby borough Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	30 Sept 2022	Community Advice & Support Team Manager
1.4	Review our approach to the provision of temporary accommodation	30 June 2022	Community Advice & Support Team Manager
1.5	Review the housing allocations policy	30 Sept 2022	Community Advice & Support Team Manager
1.6	Carry out a comprehensive review of the PHIL project to ensure a continued demonstration of value for money and to identify any alternative delivery/funding models	31 Oct 2022	Prevention Manager (PHIL project)
1.7	Review the contracts for advice and support services, including those with CAB and WCAVA as part of a proposed review of corporate support for the wider voluntary and community sector	31 Dec 2022	Communities and Projects Manager
1.8	Develop and implement new borough wide Financial Inclusion Strategy	31 Dec 2022	Community Advice & Support Team Manager
1.9	Increase opportunities for tenant involvement in line with the requirements set out in the government's White Paper	30 Sept 2022	Communities & Projects Manager

Appendix One – Housing Strategy 2022-2024 Action Plan

Theme Two - To increase the affordable housing supply available to meet needs, through new supply or making most effective use of existing housing stock.

	What we will do	When	Lead officer
2.1	Review our approach to Council house building and property acquisitions (including S106 opportunities) to increase the Council housing portfolio	30 June 2022	Property Manager/ Communities & Projects Manager
2.2	Develop and implement a new Housing Revenue Account business plan to fund the key investment priorities for council housing for the next 30 years, including new house building and acquisitions	30 June 2023	Communities & Projects Manager
2.3	Continue to progress the new development company and monitor its outputs	31 Dec 2023	Housing Services Manager
2.4	Review the potential for the re-designation of the Council's housing to more effectively meet needs	31 March 2023	Housing Services Manager
2.5	Consider how we can better work with partners to make best use of disability-adapted and larger social-housing units	31 Dec 2022	Community Advice and Support Team Manager
2.6	Review the affordability and accessibility of extra-care housing in Rugby for those in housing need	30 Sept 2022	Communities & Projects Manager
2.7	Assess the impact of the HEART scheme in helping customers to access aids and adaptations in their homes	31 Dec 2022	Chief Officer Communities and Homes
2.8	Create a lettings approach for new council homes	31 March 2023	Community Advice & Support Team Manager
2.9	Review our nomination agreements to ensure they are fit for purpose	30 Sept 2022	Housing Services Manager

Appendix One – Housing Strategy 2022-2024 Action Plan

Theme Three - To increase the quality and affordability of homes by improving the energy efficiency of our poorer performing housing stock.

	What we will do	When	Lead officer
3.1	Develop an approach to enabling energy efficiency improvements in private sector housing	31 March 2023	Chief Officer (Communities and Homes)
3.2	Review our approach to collecting, analysing and interpreting data to inform our plans for the future maintenance and investment in our housing stock	31 Dec 2022	Asset Maintenance Team Leader
3.3	Update the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Delivery Plan	30 June 2023	Property Manager and Chief Officer Communities and Homes
3.4	Devise a new fully-funded improvement programme for Council housing by preparing a new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	30 June 2023	Communities & Projects Manager
3.5	Begin planning for the 2025 “no gas boiler” deadline to contribute to the decarbonisation agenda	31 March 2022	Asset Maintenance Team Leader
3.6	Develop and implement a Carbon Management Plan to complement the aims of the new Climate Change Strategy	31 Aug 2022	Chief Officer (Communities and Homes)
3.7	Introduce the new Technology Forge Asset Management System	30 April 2022	Project Delivery and Account Management Lead Officer IT and Digital Services
3.8	Implement the service improvement plan arising from the strategic review of the Property Repairs Service	31 Dec 2023	Property Repairs Manager
3.9	Identify opportunities for customers to access support from energy suppliers in respect of debt management issues	30 June 2022	Communities & Projects Manager
3.10	Design out service charges in new housing developments wherever possible	30 Dec 2023	Property Manager
3.11	Consider the potential for creating a borough wide landlord forum	30 Dec 2022	Communities & Projects Manager

Appendix One – Housing Strategy 2022-2024 Action Plan

Theme Four - To ensure that our new housing developments are making a positive contribution towards sustainable communities which we can be proud of now and in the future.

	What we will do	When	Lead officer
4.1	Develop and adopt a Community Development Strategy for the new developments at Rounds Gardens and Biart Place	31 Dec 2023	Communities and Projects Manager
4.2	Develop a local lettings plan for the new homes at Biart Place and Rounds Gardens	31 March 2023	Community Advice and Support Team Manager
4.3	Consider the potential for affordable housing delivery as part of the emerging plans for the regeneration of the Town Centre	31 Dec 2023	Property Manager

TRANSPORT

Our 2030 Goals:

- The Borough will benefit from an integrated and affordable sustainable transport system, where public transport is a viable and affordable option.
- The Borough will benefit from infrastructure which enables residents and visitors to make more journeys by active transport such as walking and cycling.
- The Borough will benefit from a transport system that is resilient to the changing climate.
- We will lead by example by transitioning the Council's own fleet to low/ zero emissions alternatives by 2030.

2.	What we will do	How we will progress this in 2022/23	By When	Measures of success	Responsible Officer	Progress	Corporate Strategy Reference
Delivering Change							
2.1	Work to decarbonise the Council's fleet by 2030.	<p>We will move the Mayor's Car to an electric vehicle.</p> <p>We will commission a report to define the stages and milestones for moving the council's fleet to low and zero carbon alternatives and will work towards a target of decarbonising the fleet by 2030 or earlier.</p>	<p>April 2023</p> <p>April 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric vehicle procured • Report produced and agreed 	Chief Officer – Operations and Traded Services		1a 1b 4a 4d
2.2	Reduce emissions from commuting to work and staff journeys by improving the provision and uptake of more active, public transport and low emissions travel options	<p>We will investigate and if appropriate establish a car sharing/car club scheme for council employees.</p> <p>We will promote 'Cyclescheme' throughout the workforce</p>	<p>April 2023</p> <p>August 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car club / sharing scheme agreed and implemented • Cyclescheme promoted to all staff 	Deputy Executive Director		1a 1b 4a 4d
2.3	Develop the Council's own estate charging infrastructure by installing EV charging points to ensure that business journeys can be supported by suitable electric vehicle charging.	We will develop and agree an EV Charging Strategy and we will have installed at least 3 EV charging points on council owned land.	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EV Charging Strategy agreed • Number of EV charging points installed 	Deputy Executive Director		1a 1b

Appendix 2 Glossary of terms used in this strategy

For the purpose of this strategy, the following definitions apply:

Designated Protected Area (DPA) these are specific rural areas of the borough where the equity stake of shared ownership homes cannot exceed 80% (if in greenbelt or former open countryside) to ensure that they remain as affordable homes in perpetuity

Homes England (HE) is the government appointed body that administers affordable housing and infrastructure grants to support the delivery of new affordable homes

Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) a sub-regional study, carried out in accordance with strict methodologies, prescribed by government, and in compliance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework

Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LADS) is a Government energy efficiency scheme, aiming to raise the energy efficiency of low income and low energy performance homes and essentially help reduce fuel poverty.

Local Housing allowance (LHA) these are government prescribed allowances capping the entitlement of housing benefit for tenants renting from private landlords within a local area. There may be more than once LHA in an area – for example, there are two in Rugby.

Registered Provider (RP) is a registered provider of social housing in England. This can include councils and private registered providers. All are subject to the same regulatory framework as prescribed by the Regulator for Social Housing.

Staircasing (for shared ownership) is when a part-owner buys additional equity in their homes. There is a presumption that people will want to staircase to 100% home-ownership but this will be dependent on the availability or mortgage finance etc. Such properties in designated protected areas will not be allowed to staircase to 100% homeownership (see above).

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