APPENDIX 1
Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021
### Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chapter</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Executive Summary, Our Vision and Priorities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Achievements from previous strategies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Oxford’s Housing Challenge</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Increase housing supply &amp; improve access to affordable housing</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Prevent homelessness &amp; meet the needs of vulnerable people (including: Rough Sleeping &amp; Single Homelessness in the City)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Make best use of private Sector accommodation (Including: Bringing empty properties back into use)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Invest to create sustainable communities that are Safe &amp; Healthy</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Funding</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Conclusion and priorities for action</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Evidence Base (separate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Strategy Action Plan</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>National and Oxfordshire Context</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Welfare Reform – Summary of main changes since 2011</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 2.1</td>
<td>Housing Needs Year End Performance 2016/17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 3.1</td>
<td>Private Rental Market Statistics</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 3.2</td>
<td>Where the Housing and Homelessness Strategy Fits</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4.1</td>
<td>Apportionment of Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need To Be Delivered In Each Oxfordshire District Authority</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4.2</td>
<td>Housing Delivery in Oxfordshire – all types of completions</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4.3</td>
<td>Dwellings Delivered/Completed in Oxford 2006-2016</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4.4</td>
<td>Oxford’s Housing Delivery Trajectory to 2016</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4.5</td>
<td>Oxford Estimated Affordable Housing Delivery Programme 2017-23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 5.1</td>
<td>Housing Options &amp; Homelessness Prevention Customer Pathway</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 5.2</td>
<td>Oxford City Council Official Street Count v Estimate of Rough Sleepers</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 5.3</td>
<td>Homeless Hostel and Supported Accommodation in Oxford</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 5.4</td>
<td>Adult Homeless Pathway (Provision For Oxford City)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 6.1</td>
<td>Number of Long-term Empty Homes in Oxford (over 6 months)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 6.2</td>
<td>Legislation &amp; Associated Powers That Can Be Used To Bring Empty Properties back Into Use.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword


With average house prices around 16 times the yearly average household income, Oxford is one of the most unaffordable cities to live in England. The high demand for housing and limited supply of it, primarily caused by constrained development opportunities, harms both Oxford’s residents and local businesses, causing increasing hardship for some people and threatening the local economy. In addition, changes introduced by new legislation, Government policy and unprecedented reductions in national Government and county-level funding mean that the demand for City Council resources has greatly increased. To deliver more housing and effective, efficient homelessness prevention services, the Council will need to prioritise activities to increase housing supply, improve access to quality affordable housing, and deliver more innovative approaches with existing and new partners.

This single overarching strategy sets out the Council's vision for housing and how it will work in partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness and meet housing needs. It combines what were previously three separate strategies, making it easier for our customers and stakeholders to understand how we intend to build on our achievements to address the housing challenges for Oxford.

The priorities in this new combined strategy will ensure that good quality housing and housing related services contribute towards improving and enhancing the health and wellbeing of the residents of Oxford, and have a positive impact on building sustainable and prosperous communities where diverse needs are met. We want Oxford to be a City where people have access to affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives within sustainable and thriving communities – contributing to "Building a world class city for everyone".

In terms of successes, significant progress has been made on the objectives set out in the Council’s individual Housing, Homelessness and Empty Property Strategies which are all due to expire in 2018. The Council’s Housing Service was awarded the “Gold Standard” in Housing and Homelessness Prevention by the National Practitioner Support Service in July 2017, putting Oxford City Council in the top 3% of all local authorities in England. In addition, the City Council has set up a Housing Company to secure delivery of more homes, funded by a £61m loan from the Council; invested £10m to acquire more temporary accommodation units; invested £5m in the Real Lettings scheme; and £20m in refurbishment of the City’s tower blocks. The Council has also led on a successful bid that secured Government funding for a countywide two-year pilot “Trailblazer” scheme, focusing on innovation in homelessness prevention.

The work to develop this draft strategy has been informed by stakeholder feedback, and runs in parallel to the work on the City Council’s Local Plan 2036. It has been published for a period of public consultation and your views are important to us. Please provide your feedback through the online survey or by attending one of the consultation events between Sept and Oct 2017 (see our website for details). We look forward to hearing from you.

Councillor Mike Rowley (Portfolio Holder for Housing)
1. Executive Summary, Our Vision and Priorities

1.1 Oxford faces huge housing challenges and tackling them is a top priority for Oxford City Council. The high demand for housing and limited supply of it, primarily caused by constrained development opportunities, creates significant affordability issues which impact upon both Oxford’s residents and local businesses, causing increasing hardship for some people and threatening the local economy.

1.2 Oxford key facts:

- The average house price of £491,900 is around 16 times the average yearly household income £29,400 (ref. Centre for Cities 2017).
- The number of people who own their own home is well below national average at 47% compared to 63% in England as a whole.
- The City has a large private rented sector (28%) compared to the South East and England (both approximately 16%), and a sizeable social rented sector (21%). 2% of households are living rent free.
- The median private rent for a three-bedroom house is £300 per week, over half median earnings and 30% above the Local Housing Allowance Rate of £230 per week.
- There are over 3,300 households on the City Council’s Housing Register.
- 7,702 families are overcrowded by housing circumstances (Local Insight 17/01/17).
- Homelessness pressures are increasing, with over 100 households per month approaching the Council as homeless and requesting assistance. Street Counts of rough sleepers also show high and sustained levels of rough sleeping in the city.
- Between 24,000 and 32,000 new homes are needed to meet Oxford’s housing need over the period 2011 to 2031, it is estimated that only 7,511 of these can be provided within the city.
- Oxford City has a population of 161,300 (ONS 2016 mid-year estimate)¹ which is set to grow to 182,300 by 2031 (based on local population growth of 15,000 every 10 years)²
- Oxford is currently the twelfth fastest growing city, with one third of the population aged 18-29 and a smaller (but growing) older population especially in the 85+ age group.
- 32,000 students are enrolled for full-time studies in two universities
- At least 46,000 people commute into Oxford for work.

(More information on Oxford’s housing profile can be found in Chapter 3)

1.3 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to have a strategy in place that sets out its vision for housing and how it will prevent and tackle homelessness and meet housing needs across its administrative area. This

¹ https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/459/oxfords_population
² Data source: www.visionofbritain.org.uk/England & Wales Censuses
Strategy combines and replaces the City Council’s Housing Strategy 2015-18, Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 and Empty Property Strategy 2013-18. It presents a clear and coherent, forward thinking approach to tackling the complex issues faced by Oxford and the City Council in delivering its vision for housing in the face of changing legislation, Government policy and austerity. The strategy aims to help customers and stakeholders to understand what the Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to work with a broad range of partners to deliver innovative approaches, take necessary actions and make real change.

1.4 New legislation and the lack of clarity on policy initiatives introduced by Government, as well as national and local funding pressures, create ongoing challenges for service delivery and uncertainty about how they will impact upon our services in the longer term. These include:

- A national 1% annual reduction in social rents for four years from April 2016; which will impact on money available for the Council’s housing services in the short and longer term.

- The proposed requirement for local authorities to pay a levy to Government, based on the sale of higher value council homes. This proposal is delayed from the expected start in 2017/18 and further clarification is needed as to whether it will continue or not.

- Changes to welfare, including changes to Local Housing Allowance and the roll out of Universal Credit as a single benefit payment made direct to tenants.

- Guidance from the Government on the mandatory introduction of flexible tenancies for Councils is pending. This will affect our Tenancy Strategy which is due for renewal in 2018.

- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – this new legislation will give Council’s additional duties to prevent homelessness. The Act is due to be implemented from April 2018 however the Homelessness Code of Guidance is yet to be published and the allocation of any Government ‘new burdens’ funding to support Local Authorities in the implementation of the new Act, will not be known until later in 2017/18. The Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer project aims to test innovative approaches to inform future change.

- Implications of the Housing and Planning Act (2016) and the direction of Government policy set out in the Housing White Paper (2017), could see changes to planning and a greater role for Councils in house building.

- Reductions to County funding of homelessness services and recommissioning of homelessness pathways.
1.5 In addition, policy developments in Oxfordshire have the potential to bring new challenges, opportunities and new approaches to housing delivery. These include:

- Development of a new Local Plan for Oxford to shape and guide the future development of the City to 2036.
- Joint work with Oxfordshire partners through the Growth Board on strategic planning, infrastructure and a potential place-based deal for Oxfordshire.
- The National Infrastructure Commission’s study on the Oxfordshire to Cambridge corridor which will make recommendations to government about investment needed to support economic and housing growth.

(More detail about the National and Oxfordshire context can be found in Appendix C and throughout the chapters within this strategy).

Our Vision and Priorities

1.6 The City Council’s Vision is:

To build a world class city for everyone by creating successful places in which to live and work, and by supporting people to reach their potential. Working in partnership, we will create a strong local economy and a city in which all our residents can thrive.

1.7 We continue to pursue this ambition within the context of the challenges explained earlier e.g. unprecedented reductions in Central Government and county level funding; reductions in rental income from council housing; increasing demand for housing, homelessness and support services; and significant government policy changes particularly with regard to welfare reform and housing. Such challenges, place significant pressure on the City Council’s ability to deliver investment in affordable housing, deliver regeneration of our estates, and indeed could threaten the future of Council housing and growth of the economy in the city.

1.8 However, the City Council has set out within its Corporate Plan, a clear commitment to:

- Tackling the city’s housing challenges
- Building more affordable homes
- Improving conditions for private tenants
- Improving homes for our existing tenants
- Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

1.9 The ambition of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 is:

Oxford to be a City where people have access to affordable and high quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.
1.10 To achieve this, our strategic aims are to:

1.10.1 Increase housing supply and improve access to affordable housing
  - Tackle the City’s housing challenges by promoting high quality development in the City, and in locations near to Oxford that are well-connected to the City, working in partnership with others, to build the homes that Oxford needs.
  - Build more affordable homes, in partnership with others to meet the needs of different income and employment groups in the City, including those on low incomes and those who are vulnerable and need support.

1.10.2 Chapter 4 explains more about the City Council’s challenges in delivering more housing and the actions that need to be undertaken, in partnership, to deliver a range of housing that will support the social and economic growth of the City and meet Oxford’s housing needs now and in the future.

1.11 Prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people
  - Deliver early intervention actions along with quality, holistic housing advice and effective partnership working to prevent homelessness.
  - Reduce rough sleeping and single homelessness with collaborative partnership working and effective supported housing pathways to help people to sustain their existing accommodation, and to provide accommodation and support for those in housing crisis.
  - Continue to reduce the number of homeless households that require emergency or temporary accommodation.

1.11.1 Tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping in the City requires a significant amount of partnership working, especially where there are complex issues that require multi-agency approaches. More details about how the City Council works with partners to deliver effective homelessness prevention services, and provide accommodation and support for individuals and families, who are in housing crisis, can be found in Chapter 5.

1.12 Make best use of private sector accommodation
  - Bring empty properties back into use within the City – both residential dwellings and commercial buildings.
  - Improve access to homes available to rent in the private sector for people receiving low incomes.
  - Improve the condition of homes in the private sector by working with private sector landlords and actively enforcing standards for private rented housing; improving energy efficiency; and managing the impact on neighbourhoods of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

1.12.1 The cost of private rented accommodation in Oxford is high however it can provide an alternative housing option to social rented accommodation. The City Council offers various rent deposit and rent guarantee schemes to eligible households and also works with private sector landlords to improve access to good quality, affordable accommodation in Oxford. By supporting tenants to maintain their private rented tenancies and working with owners to bring their empty properties back into use, the City Council aims to increase access to private sector accommodation, reduce homelessness, and reduce the
demand for social rented accommodation in the City. More details can be found in Chapter 6.

1.13 **Invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy**
- Regenerate estates to continue to improve and make best use of Council-owned and private sector housing.
- Improve the general environment of our estates by delivering our investment programmes and contributing to programmes designed to improve health and wellbeing of residents.
- Take action to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit.

1.13.1 Chapter 7 describes how the work of the City Council to: deliver planned major refurbishment and estate regeneration projects; regulate private rented sector properties (including Houses in Multiple Occupation); improve energy efficiency across all tenures; deliver projects to improve the health and wellbeing of communities; deliver tenancy support; and mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform changes on residents through proactive advice and intervention, can all help to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy.

1.14 **Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services**
- Retain, let and manage good quality Council-owned homes at affordable rents that residents can sustain effectively, and ensure that tenancy arrangements are aligned with new legislation.
- Continue to improve the condition of Council stock through capital investment programmes focussed on regeneration and refurbishment projects.
- Continue to support a resident-led approach to developing high quality and inclusive services.

1.14.1 The City Council aims to maintain its high standard of service delivery and to enhance opportunities for Council Tenants to be more involved in developing services in the future. Chapter 8 describes in more detail how we will do this and also further align our services to meet new legislation and emerging Government guidance; deliver our housing and landlord services to help tenants to maintain and sustain their tenancies; make best use of Council housing stock; and improve digital access to housing information by procuring a new housing management system and updating advice/information on our website.

1.15 We recognise that our vision and strategic aims are ambitious. However, we have set ambitious targets within previous strategies and have set out in Chapter 2, some of the significant achievements to date. Chapter 3 of this strategy provides more detail on Oxford’s housing profile and accommodation needs of specific groups. It also provides more local context and narrative on the challenges that this combined Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 seeks to address. As explained earlier, Chapters 4-8 provide more detail about the priorities we have identified and the actions we will need to take, in partnership with other statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations, to address the challenges going forward. We will do all
that we can to work towards achieving our vision and strategic aims within the national and local context (also see Appendix C for more detail on the national and local policy context), and the resources that are available to us. The available/secured funding and other potential funding sources are outlined in Chapter 9, however it is important to note that the City Council's Medium Term Financial Plan will be reviewed and updated from time to time throughout the life of this strategy.

1.16 The overarching principles, in working towards achieving our vision and strategic aims, are that the Council must:

- Work in partnership with developers, registered providers, universities and the health sector, statutory partners, the third and voluntary sectors, businesses, and neighbouring District Councils to maximise resources and achieve the desired outcomes.
- Deliver efficient and effective services, and operate sustainably, whilst prioritising the protection of essential services.
- Target scarce resources to those who are most in need.

1.17 Chapter 10 sets out the identified priorities of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 and a summary of the actions that we wish to take to deliver them. This is reflected in more detail in the Action Plan (Appendix B) which identifies the various work streams (including the partner agencies who may want to take a lead or assist in the delivery of them) over the next 12-18 months. The Action Plan will be kept under review and a new one produced in consultation with stakeholders prior to the mid-point of the strategy term. This will ensure that the actions remain relevant and responsive to change.

1.18 Underpinning the development of this strategy is an Evidence Base provided as Appendix A with referenced data sources. Appendix A will be updated annually to assist in identifying any changes or trends in the local housing market and to support the mid-term review of this strategy and its associated Action Plan (Appendix B).
2. Achievements from Previous Strategies

2.1 In drafting the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21, it has been important to reflect upon what has been achieved to date under our Housing Strategy 2015-2018 and Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018, and Empty Property Strategy 2013-18. Significant progress has been made towards delivering the actions set out in each of the strategy action plans and residual actions have been rolled forward to this new combined strategy.

2.2 Each original strategy had overriding priority objectives, below are some of the successful outcomes that the Council has achieved to date:

### 2.3 Housing Strategy 2015-18

#### Priority 1: Increase the supply and improve access to affordable housing

- Enabled delivery of 186 new affordable dwellings to meet housing needs.
- Acquired 44 properties to improve access for families needing temporary accommodation.
- Housing Company established with a business plan to provide an ongoing programme of mixed tenure housing development.
- Ongoing evaluation of under-occupation in social housing and proactive promotion of an incentives scheme to assist planned moves for those seeking to downsize their home.

#### Priority 2: Meet the housing needs of vulnerable people

- Provided more comprehensive information on Choice Based Lettings (CBL) to assist disabled housing applicants locate appropriate accommodation with a specialist Allocations Officer dedicated to help.
- The Sites and Housing Plan continues to be applied to qualifying developments which requires lifetime homes standards (or new accessible standards as part of Building Regulations) for all new residential dwellings and 5% to be wheelchair accessible/adaptable on sites of 20 or more dwellings.
- The Council has invested £5m, with match funding of £5m from external parties, into a National Homelessness Property Fund. This fund has been used to purchase around 50 one and two bedroom units of accommodation locally, to be let at Local Housing Allowance rates to persons nominated by the City Council to prevent homelessness.
- Facilitated 610 apprenticeships for 2016/17 with funding to continue into the next financial year.
Priority 3: Support the growth of a balanced housing market

- The City Council has entered into a joint venture with Nuffield College to develop Oxpens as a residential site.
- Discussions and consultations carried out with residents to facilitate the regeneration of Blackbird Leys and Barton district centres.
- Implemented the Real Lettings Scheme (acquisition of 50 units in total of which 47 supplied by Autumn 2017) and Rent Guarantee scheme through partnership working with private sector organisations to manage private rented units and maintain rents within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.
- The Council’s Joint Venture with Grosvenor has commenced development at Barton Park and the first phase of homes is due for completion in March 2018.
- £20m invested in refurbishment of the City’s Tower blocks.

Priority 4: Support sustainable communities

- Introduced the Local Energy Advice Project (LEAP) which took 65 referrals and completed 51 home visits.
- 16 referrals made to income maximisation services plus numerous small repairs.
- Liaised with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) through the Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation Group to identify ways of working with doctors to highlight housing related health issues which impact on education.
- Continuing to deliver the Great Estates Programme.
- Since April 2015 a total of 42 empty homes have been brought back into use.
- Two Energy Advice Officers have been in post to give direct support and guidance to tenants on their energy use and energy bills via home visits.
- Improved awareness and access to health services for families in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) via property inspections and referrals/links to Health Visitors.

2.4 The following table provides a brief overview of the key Housing Needs performance figures for year end 2015/16 and 2016/2017.

FIG 2.1 Housing Needs Year End Performance 2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>End of Year 2015/2016</th>
<th>End of Year 2016/2017</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Prevention Cases</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>1107</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty interviews</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless applications taken</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless accepted decisions</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of households in temporary</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Choice applicants – New Starts</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee Scheme (New</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenancy Sustainment referrals</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social tenure properties let from a Council offer or nomination</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>516</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties released through the incentives scheme for under-occupying Council tenants to</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Rough Sleepers (annual)</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>300</td>
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### 2.5 Homelessness Strategy 2013-18

#### Priority One: Preventing and responding to homelessness

**Temporary Accommodation**
- 2016/17 we reduced the amount of homeless households in temporary accommodation by 16% (from 115 households in March 16 to 96 in March 17).
- Oxford City Council continues to purchase its own stock for temporary accommodation in an effort to reduce costs and avoid the use of B&B accommodation.

**Homelessness Prevention**
- Increased access to private rented accommodation using Localism Act 2011 and where necessary, implemented out of area placements.
- Oxford City Council has invested capital to enable the purchase of private rented stock out of area.
- Continued to educate young people about homelessness via links with the Youth Ambition Team.
- Re-commissioned homelessness pathways for young people and single adults.
- Continued partnership working with Aspire, Crisis Skylight and Emmaus to identify, develop and sustain employment opportunities for homeless and vulnerable people.
- Worked in partnership with advice agencies and the City Council’s Welfare Reform Team to implement the Financial Inclusion Strategy and assist families who have been affected by Welfare Reform changes.
- Revised Service Level Agreements (SLA) to improve referrals to debt and money management advice services.

#### Priority Two: Preventing and responding to rough sleeping

- Implementation of No Second Night Out (NSNO) programme.
- Worked with Outreach services to ensure that rough sleepers with no local connection to Oxford are supported and where possible reconnected to services in their originating area.
- Incentivised the new Oxford Street Population Outreach Team (SPOT) contract, linking accommodation to entrenched rough sleepers and homeless people.
- Improved pathways through supported, specialist accommodation for former rough sleepers.

#### Priority Three: Developing partnerships and communications

- Reviewed recorded information and trends to inform future policy and service development.
- The Strategy Evidence Base has been reviewed and an update published annually on the website – latest version published November 2016.
- Customer satisfaction survey introduced and monitored monthly – shows overall 86% customer satisfaction with services.
Priority Three Continued….

- Attained Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation which is regularly monitored.
- Commissioned specialist complex needs service for the city and improved data sharing across services including mental health by incorporating CHAIN data into the new homeless pathway arrangements.
- Pre-eviction protocol in place to assist preventative pre-possession agreements with Registered Providers (RPs) and City Council Landlord Services.

Priority Four: Deliver excellent homelessness services

- Achieved the Gold Standard Award from National Practitioner Support Service for homeless prevention (meeting 10 local challenges in the process).
- Using bench-marking schemes such as HouseMark data and Star survey to review performance, customer satisfaction and cost effectiveness of housing services.
- Investors in People accreditation continues to be reviewed enabling staff to provide a quality service – currently at Gold Standard.

2.6 Empty Property Strategy 2013-18

2.6.1 The Action Plan within the Empty Property Strategy 2013-18, highlighted the key activities to reduce the number of empty properties in the City and bring them back to residential use. 62 properties have been brought back into use since 2015. The key actions taken to date are:

- Developed and maintained an Empty Homes database to increase reporting on empty homes.
- Undertaken annual campaigns (Empty Homes Week) to raise awareness of empty homes and the need to bring them back into use.
- Developed an interested purchaser's database.
- Proactively worked with empty dwelling owners to reduce the number of empty dwellings in Oxford from 365 in 2015 to 303 in March 2017.
- Submitted an application to the Secretary of State to allow the Council to execute a Compulsory Purchase Order on one long-term empty dwelling.
- Considered a number of empty commercial buildings that may be of interest for change of use or redevelopment to provide some residential accommodation (subject to the owner’s agreement and meeting planning and economic development requirements).
3. Oxford’s Housing Challenge

Oxford’s Housing Profile

3.1 High demand for, and scarce availability of homes mean that there is a severe housing challenge in Oxford that causes hardship for individuals and families and is an increasing constraint on the economic success of the area. The limited availability and associated high cost of housing has been identified by local employers, including BMW Group, the Universities and the NHS, as a major barrier to recruitment and retention of staff. Currently, around 46,000 people commute into Oxford for work. To further understand the complexity of the national and local context, additional information has been provided throughout this chapter and in Appendix C.

Population

3.2 Oxford City has a population of 161,300 (ONS 2016 mid-year estimate) which is set to grow to around 180,000 by 2036. Oxford is currently the twelfth fastest growing city, with one third of the population aged 18-29 and a smaller (but growing) older population especially in the 85+ age group.

Affordability in Oxford

3.3 The average house price in Oxford of around £491,900 is approximately 16 times the average yearly household income £29,400 (ref. Centre for Cities 2017). The number of people who own their own home is well below national average at 47% compared to 63% in England as a whole.

3.4 During 2015-2016 house prices in Oxford rose by 8.5% compared to 3.2% nationally. However, house price inflation in Oxford (March 2016 to March 2017) was running at 3.7% compared to a UK average of 5.7%. House price growth in Oxford has slowed to less than 5% for the first time in five years as affordability pressures, and tax changes for investors constrain demand. Although house prices have slowed, they are still beyond the affordability reach of many lower income households in the City.

3.5 Oxford’s private rented sector remains buoyant with an increasing demand from a large student population, potential owner occupiers who have been priced out of the market, and a lack of social housing for those on low incomes. The City has a large private rented sector (28%) compared to the South East and England (both approximately 16%).

3.6 Despite a buoyant market, affordability of private rented accommodation is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many households on lower incomes. Fig 3.1 provides a comparison of median private rents.

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3 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/459/oxfords_population
4 ONS 2014-based subnational population projections
5 Cities Outlook 2017 - Centre for Cities (Jan 2017) report
6 Hometrack UK Cities House Price Index, March 2017 (See Appendix A)
FIG 3.1 Private Rental Market Statistics

Summary of monthly rents recorded between 1 October 2015 and 30 September 2016 by administrative area for England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>Oxford Median Rent</th>
<th>Oxfordshire Median Rent</th>
<th>England Median Rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room only</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedroom</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedroom</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bedroom minimum</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>1,878</td>
<td>1,275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/

3.7 Welfare Reform changes are also impacting on the Council’s ability to accommodate homeless households in the private rented sector within the City. As a consequence, households who are unable to afford to buy or privately rent accommodation in the City are considering other ‘out of area’ options. The City Council is also sourcing accommodation outside (but close to) its administrative area with a view to finding suitable and affordable accommodation for those in housing need.

Student Accommodation

3.8 24% of Oxford’s adult population are students – the highest proportion in England. In December 2015, the University of Oxford had 17,748 full time students with accommodation requirements, of which 2,932 lived outside of university provided accommodation (below the Council’s Core Strategy target of 3,000). However, in the same period, Oxford Brookes University exceeded the Core Strategy target with over 3,700 students living outside of University provided accommodation. This indicates an increased pressure on the availability of private rented and other shared accommodation in the City to house all households. The City Council is committed to working with the Universities to assist them to consider how to make best use of existing student accommodation and put plans in place to meet the identified demand.

Housing Need

3.9 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014 for Oxfordshire identifies that Oxford needs between 24,000 and 32,000 new homes over the period 2011 to 2031 to meet the City’s growing need for housing. Given the limitations presented by a confined development boundary around the City, it is difficult to deliver the scale of housing development and accommodation required to meet the needs of everyone.

3.10 Demand for housing is high and includes housing to meet the needs of older people, younger people, families, people with disabilities or limited mobility, ex-military personnel, prison leavers, young people leaving care, Key Workers, and groups defined within legislation as Gypsies, Travellers and Bargee/Boat Dwellers.
Existing Social and Affordable Rented homes in Oxford

3.11 The social and affordable rented accommodation in Oxford includes:
- 7,746 Council-owned dwellings and
- 3,753 dwellings that are owned, let and managed by Registered Provider partners, over which the council has nomination rights.
- Since 2013, there have been 156 Council properties sold under the Right to Buy.
- The details in relation to the supply of hostel and supported housing provision for homeless households in the City can be found in Chapter 5.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

3.12 The number of people claiming and being accepted as homeless increased from 114 in 2014/15 to 141 in 2015/16. However with a focus on prevention activities and ability to use powers under the Localism Act, the numbers have decreased again in 2016/17, albeit not to the lower levels seen in previous years.

Homelessness claims and acceptances

3.13 Despite the provision of comprehensive homelessness services and supported hostel accommodation in the City, street homelessness and rough sleeping has increased in recent years, reflecting the national picture. There has been an increase in the number of people found rough sleeping with no local connection to Oxford and who are looking for work and somewhere to live. The challenges of preventing homelessness and rough sleeping are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Affordable housing need (general)

3.14 Given the affordability pressures within Oxford, the SHMA estimates that around 1,029 affordable homes would need to be delivered each year 2016-2031 to meet the backlog and future affordable housing need. The previous Housing Strategy 2015-18 placed a target on the council to ensure delivery of 35 affordable homes per annum, based on achievable delivery through the housing development programme at the time. It is evident that we need to take an ambitious, action-focused approach to meet the challenge of delivering housing development programmes and improving access to affordable housing.
in the volumes required to address the objectively assessed housing need. These issues are explored further in Chapter 4.

**Affordable housing need – Housing Register**

3.15 In July 2017, over 60% of the 3300 households on the Housing Register were in Band 5 (lowest band for housing need) and although they have a need for affordable accommodation, the lack of supply means that they are highly unlikely to be offered social housing in the near future. More details about household needs and supply of properties to let in 2016/17 are included in Appendix A.

3.16 One of the implications of the high cost of home ownership in Oxford, is that households are renting homes for longer, and young adults in their 20’s and 30’s are still living with families or in shared accommodation. Over the last two years, although there have been allocations of social housing made to overcrowded households in that time, the proportion of overcrowded households on the Council’s housing register remains around the 22% mark. Conversely, 14% of households on the Council’s housing register are under-occupying their homes. Just under a third of them are social housing tenants looking to downsize. Therefore it is important that the Council continues to work to make best use of existing Council housing stock through tenant incentives such as the City Council’s Removals and Expenses Mobility Scheme (REMS), which facilitated 50 households to move in 2016/17. The chart below shows the Housing Register position in July 2017.

3.17 There is also a lack of accommodation available to meet affordable housing needs in general. Although 69% of social housing stock in Oxford is family sized accommodation (2+ bedrooms), only 46% of re-lets in 2016/17 were family sized units. The graph below demonstrates the difference between need for different affordable housing property sizes and the actual supply through lettings in 2016/17. (See also Appendix A).
Collective evidence suggests that there is a need to provide more 1 bedroom flats and 2 bedroom houses but also a smaller but very acute need for 4 and 5+ bedroom houses to meet the needs of a range of households. Currently there are only 37 Council-owned 5+ bedroom houses (we have nomination arrangements in place for a further 25 Registered Provider-owned 5+ bedroom homes) therefore there is a need to increase supply. We will continue the work we are already doing to make the best use of existing affordable housing stock in the city and encourage appropriate moves, house swaps, and incentivised moves.

Accommodation for Older People

In 2016, the City Council undertook a review of accommodation supply and needs of older residents in Oxford. Unsurprisingly this identified that: around 66% of households (over 65) were owner occupiers; health and mobility problems increase with age; that there is an oversupply of sheltered accommodation in some locations in Oxford; the average age of sheltered housing and Extra Care scheme residents in Oxford is 75; and there is a limited need for Extra Care and Specialist Housing (dementia care) for Older People in the City. The review also confirmed that as people get older they would prefer to live in locations familiar to them with access to existing support networks, as well as good access to shops, health services and public transport. Those 'under-occupying', regardless of tenure, indicated that they would be reluctant to move unless it was to the right property (i.e. well designed, with sufficient outdoor space and storage) and would still want a minimum of 2 bedrooms to allow visitors or carers to stay as needed.

The 2016 review set out a series of recommendations that included: decommissioning some sheltered schemes; a review of the allocations scheme to increase the age level where appropriate to 75; and to work with the County Council and other partners to identify opportunities to develop or remodel existing schemes and make best use of land assets to provide suitable accommodation for older people in the future. The City Council will continue the work already underway with the County Council to progress the
recommendations within the review and this has been included in the actions set out at the start of chapter 4 of this strategy.

**Accommodation for Younger People**

3.21 Oxford City has a younger population than that of its neighbouring Oxfordshire districts. A data exercise in autumn 2016 revealed that in Oxford, approximately 48% of customers approaching Local Authority homelessness services were aged 18 to 35. These were mostly non-priority single males, with a higher proportion originating from the top 20% of indices of deprivation areas in Oxfordshire. Out of 263 people new to rough sleeping in Oxford City in 2015/16, 41% were aged under 35. A snapshot of the City Council’s housing register data in July 2017, shows that 268 households are single and aged under 35 (approx. 35% aged 18-25 and 65% aged 26-34). See Appendix A.

3.22 The need for shared or bedsit accommodation by people under 35 years of age may increase in the near future. Government policies to extend the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to tenants in the social housing sector who are under the age of 35, means that from 2019, fewer young people will be able to afford their rent and housing costs.

3.23 This is an area of significant concern. The City Council does not, as a general rule, let shared properties. Single people living in self-contained one-bedroom properties may experience a shortfall between their contractual rent and the LHA rate for a room in shared housing within the Broad Market Rental Area (BRMA) in which they live. This shortfall could be as much as £20 per week and therefore a significant impact on their available income. Legislation to implement Shared Accommodation Rates across the social housing sector (including supported housing) has not been introduced at this point (July 2017). However, the expectation is that it will be introduced in April 2019 and more detail regarding exemptions or exceptional circumstances will be provided within published guidance.

3.24 From April 2017, the Government has cut the Housing Element of Universal Credit for 18 - under 22yr olds. This is likely to increase the risk of homelessness for people in this age group. There are exceptions to applying the cut in the case of: those who may not be able to return home to live with their parents; certain claimants who have been in work for 6 months prior to making a claim; and young people who are parents.

3.25 With these issues in mind, the City Council will need to explore all options for the continued delivery and accessibility to housing for young people under 35 from 2019. One possibility is that as the Council has around 137 bedsits in social housing stock (excl. sheltered and hostel accommodation), as part of a revised Allocations Scheme, we could consider giving additional priority to tenants in bedsits who are over 35 years of age to move to 1-bedroomed property, as this will free up bedsits for those under 35’s. The difference between contractual rent and SAR would be reduced. Another option would be to explore the provision of specific shared accommodation units.
Young People’s Supported Housing

3.26 In Oxford, the Young People’s Supported Housing Pathway is for vulnerable and homeless 16 – 22 year olds in Oxfordshire who need supported accommodation to gain and maintain independence skills, to be facilitated into education, employment or training, and to gain the knowledge and skills to make informed choices about their accommodation options outside of the Pathway.

3.27 Partnership working within the Pathway ensures that young people are able to access supported accommodation, and additional support or services where required in a timely, coordinated and safe manner. The pathway provides a range of supported housing services and, where a young person is assessed as homeless and unable to return home, they are supported within their wider family and friends’ network or helped to access private rented housing. The City Council works in partnership within a Joint Housing Protocol that is in place across Oxfordshire for assessing and assisting homeless 16-17 year olds. As a housing authority, we do not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Where needed, we will also refer young parents to the Oxfordshire Young Parents scheme.

3.28 In terms of young people leaving care, the City Council works closely with statutory partners to ensure that accommodation and support is provided. In the last two years, the number of young people (aged 18-20) who were formerly in care and who have applied to the City Council for housing assistance has been low. However, during the consultation process to develop this strategy, partner agencies highlighted the need to provide more suitable and affordable accommodation for care leavers (especially those with more complex and continuing support needs). The provision of accommodation for Care Leavers could become a pressure point to local housing authorities due to the changes being introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 in respect of local connection. We will work with statutory and non-statutory agencies plus other key stakeholders to establish what type and model of accommodation (and related support) would best assist young people leaving care in transitioning to independence.

3.29 The City Council’s Housing Options Team currently includes a specialist officer working with young people to support them with their housing needs. This includes undertaking Young People’s Housing Assessments and making referrals to young people’s projects. The officer works with care leavers and social services in order to avoid young people becoming street homeless.

3.30 The plans to identify and improve the homelessness prevention activities across the County in respect of under 35’s and others (Trailblazer Project), is further discussed in subsequent chapters to this strategy.
Accommodation needs of families

3.31 The housing register identifies a need for all house types and sizes of houses for families, in particular a need for 2 and 5+ bedroom houses at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels of rent to ensure that they are affordable.

3.32 In December 2016 the Department for Work and Pensions introduced a further reduction to the Benefit Cap, reducing the benefit income that a household could receive, therefore having an adverse impact on a families' ability to afford their rent (due to the difference between the contractual rent and the reduced housing benefit and Universal Credit housing costs), especially where there are more than 2 children in the household. The total benefit income per week for a:
- Family, couple or single parent with children reduced from £500 to £385
- Single people without children reduced from £350 to £258.

3.33 Potentially, such changes could result in the Council receiving an increased number of homelessness applications from families and an increase in homelessness decisions.

3.34 Since 2014 and the announcement of the introduction of Universal Credit, Oxford City Council’s Welfare Reform Team successfully secured European Social Funding to run a pilot scheme in helping people back to work. The team has completed early investigations and has made a significant impact by targeting help towards those families who have been affected by changes in their benefit and household income. The Welfare Reform Team has also worked jointly with the Council’s Housing Team to commission such services as Citizens Advice Bureau to provide advice and assistance to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform changes (see Chapter 7 and Appendix C for more details and the impact of Welfare Reform changes).

3.35 However where families are at risk of losing their home, in line with Oxfordshire’s Joint Housing Protocol the City Council’s Housing Team would notify Children’s Social Care of intentionally homeless decisions if the applicant has dependent(s) under 18 years of age in the household. Social Care is able to offer advice and guidance at that stage. The City Council may need to formally refer any case to Social Care if we have concerns about the welfare of any vulnerable persons in the household. This would be a referral through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

3.36 If a family becomes homeless, the City Council may place them in temporary accommodation (TA) and in the process of doing so, will consider the needs of the whole household and the suitability of the accommodation (under the relevant legislation) before placement. To ensure provision of suitable TA for families, the Council has invested funds to procure family sized accommodation. See Chapter 5 for more details.

Accommodation needs of people with disabilities or limited mobility

3.37 The SHMA 2014, uses the Census 2011 data and estimates that in Oxfordshire 22% of households contain someone with a long-term health problem or disability. This varies in each district due to the link between age and health,
and as Oxford has a younger population, the proportion of people with a long-term health problem or disability is relatively low level compared to other Oxfordshire districts. The SHMA highlights that demographic trends are expected to lead to a significant growth in the population and number of households with disabilities over the period to 2031 and therefore housing support services, including provision of adaptations to properties, will need to be adequately resourced to take account of this.

3.38 The City Council’s planning policies regarding homes built to accessible standards continue to be applied to qualifying developments of 20 or more dwellings. The policies require accessible dwelling standards as part of Building Regulations for all new residential dwellings and 5% to be wheelchair accessible/adaptable. The City Council’s housing register (July 2017) confirms that of those households with an identified mobility need, the majority only require level access to their property, with the remainder requiring some adaptations and just 5 households requiring wheelchair adapted properties.

3.39 To make best use of social housing stock, the City Council or Registered Provider partner, will ensure that advertisements on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL) of available properties to rent include details of any adaptations or wheelchair accessible features. When such properties are advertised, a specialist officer in the City Council’s Allocations Team will contact identified households to see if they are interested in the property and, where necessary, will assist the customer with the bidding process. Sometimes properties are offered as a direct match to a customer (rather than open to all via the CBL scheme) where they need a property with a lot of adaptations.

3.40 The impact of housing on a household’s health is considered as part of the housing application process. The ‘Health and Housing Assessment (HAHA) award’ indicates that the household has a proven need to move to more suitable accommodation due to a health condition or limited mobility. The HAHA may give a household a higher priority on the housing register (see Appendix A for details).

Accommodation needs of ex-military personnel

3.41 Whilst we do not have data to support a specific housing need of ex-military personnel, applications for housing would be considered under the current housing legislation and local connection criteria. Where the City Council has been approached by ex-military personnel requesting housing assistance and support, we have also worked with support services such as SAFFA, Royal British Legion and other forced-linked charities and support organisations to assist more vulnerable customers.

Accommodation for ex-offenders and prison leavers

3.42 There are prisons in Oxfordshire and some ex-offenders, upon release from prison, will attend the City Council’s duty service as being homeless. We work with the probation service to identify suitable housing opportunities as needed. However, it is clear that arrangements for prison leavers should be planned well in advance of release, therefore reducing the need to present at the duty
service. This view was supported during the consultation with stakeholders to develop this housing and homelessness strategy, and it was identified that more work needs to be done around planning for prison release e.g. planning at least 12 weeks in advance of prison release, to ensure that the individual concerned has access to suitable and supported accommodation when needed, in an area where they have a connection. The local connection criterion is already set out in the City Council’s Allocations Scheme and this criterion will continue to be applied (see Chapter 5 for the action to be taken as part of the Trailblazer Initiative).

Accommodation to meet employment sector specific needs (essential staff accommodation).

3.43 The housing challenge in Oxford has impacted upon local employers who need to retain specialist staff to provide essential local services such as care and health workers on lower incomes who cannot afford to live in Oxford. Increasingly this issue is affecting a wider group of employees beyond the traditional definition of “key workers” and includes academic, teaching and professional roles essential to Oxford’s knowledge economy. Local employers have highlighted the lack of suitable and affordable housing to meet the needs of employees, as a major barrier to recruitment and retention of staff. To remedy this, we will continue to work with major Oxford-based employers and public organisations to identify opportunities to bring forward their land to support the delivery of key staff accommodation to sustain local economic growth and continued delivery of essential services (see action in Chapter 4).

Accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers

3.44 Throughout Oxfordshire there are authorised sites to provide suitable pitches to accommodate Gypsy and Traveller communities. Some sites are private and there are also six permanent County Council-owned sites that are managed by the Oxfordshire Gypsy and Traveller Services. A Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show people assessment was completed jointly with South Oxfordshire DC, Vale of White Horse DC and Cherwell DC in 2017. The results of West Oxfordshire DC’s study were incorporated. The study concluded that there was no requirement for pitches for Gypsy’s and Travellers within Oxford.

Accommodation needs of Bargees and River/Boat Dwellers

3.45 Much of the boat-dwelling community in Oxford relies on the existence of residential moorings, which are defined as having planning permission for long-term mooring in a fixed location, and for occupation as a household’s sole or main residence. However, there is also a need to balance provision of permanent residential moorings with short-stay visitor moorings that are important in promoting tourism. The laws applying to the Canal & River Trust (CRT) and British Waterways (and both of their licensing requirements) must also be considered when establishing the need and potential provision of additional moorings.

3.46 Section 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, places a duty on local housing authorities in England to consider the needs of people residing in or
resorting to their district with respect to the provision of places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. In line with the requirement the City Council will undertake an assessment of needs of boat dwellers to inform the Local Plan submission document.

3.47 Currently, proposals for the Local Plan 2036 include a criteria based policy for determining planning applications for residential moorings, covering access for emergency services and an assessment of the availability and distance between facilities.

**How the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 fits with other strategic policies and plans.**

3.48 In terms of the local context, it is important to see where the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 will fit with key strategic work and other related documents already in existence. Fig 3.2 provides a summary diagram to demonstrate this.
FIND 3.2 Where the Housing & Homelessness Strategy fits

- Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Oxford City Council Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020
- Oxford 2050: A vision for a successful and sustainable city for everyone
- Local Plan (incl. Sites & Housing Plan) 2016 - 2036
- Work of Oxfordshire LEP & the Oxfordshire Growth Board
- Neighbourhood Development Plans

Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2021 (Including empty properties)

- Allocations Scheme
- Tenancy Strategy & Policy Statement
- Oxford City Council Private Sector Housing Policy
- Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Housing Asset Management Strategy (Council Homes)
- HRA Business Plan
4. Increasing housing supply and improving access to affordable housing

**Priority: Increase housing supply and improve access to affordable housing**

- Tackle the City’s housing challenge by promoting high quality development in the City, and in locations near to Oxford that are well-connected to the City, working in partnership with others, to build the homes that Oxford needs.
- Build more affordable homes, in partnership with others to meet the needs of different income and employment groups in the City, including those on low incomes and those who are vulnerable and need support.

**To increase and deliver new homes, we will:**

- Deliver more affordable homes either by direct development or through the Council-owned Housing Company.

- Continue to facilitate the development of more housing and affordable housing through the Local Plan and partnership working (e.g. with Universities, Public bodies, land owners etc).

- Work in partnership with other Oxfordshire Authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other key stakeholders to plan for and secure investment in infrastructure and housing needed to meet Oxfordshire’s current and future needs.

- Work with other Oxfordshire Local Authorities to agree the arrangements relating to the apportionment of housing to be developed in their area to provide for Oxford’s unmet housing need under the ‘Duty to Cooperate’ (including: the details relating to the mix of dwelling types and tenure, letting, management and affordable housing nomination arrangements).

- Ensure that Local Plan policies are developed to include opportunities to build the right mix of property types (and tenure) that will meet housing needs and maximise the opportunity to support social and economic development.

- Undertake further affordability testing as part of the policy development for the Local Plan 2036 to ensure that any affordable housing is affordable having regard to local incomes and house prices.

- Explore all opportunities for the Council and Registered Provider Partners to develop affordable housing with HCA funding.

- Work with Registered Provider’s and other public bodies to identify all opportunities for making best use of existing assets with a view to any potential redevelopment of sites, re-modelling of units where needed and opportunities for future new development.
This chapter sets out how the Council enables new housing development in Oxford and the factors influencing the delivery of more affordable homes. Some actions set out above have been identified earlier in Chapter 3 but are relevant to the priority of increasing housing supply and improving access to affordable housing.

The Local Plan sets out how we want our city to look and feel; how and where new homes, businesses, jobs, shops and infrastructure will be developed to support the growth of Oxford over the next 20 years whilst protecting and improving the environment and people’s quality of life. The policies within the Plan, along with national planning guidance are used in determining planning applications and to guide investment decisions across the city.

Work is underway on developing a new Local Plan for Oxford. Consultation on a ‘Preferred Options’ document took place over the summer of 2017. Once adopted, the Oxford Local Plan 2036 will replace the Local Plan 2001-2016, the Core Strategy 2026 and the Sites and Housing Plan. Until the new Local Plan is adopted, the existing Plan and associated policies remain in force.

Issues being addressed in the new Plan are:

- The lack of housing choice and affordability.
- The pressure on infrastructure to support new housing in and around the city.
4.5 As set out earlier, it is estimated that between 24,000 and 32,000 homes are required by 2031 to meet the needs of the City. An independent review of available housing sites across Oxford, through a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2016), estimated that there is only capacity to develop around 7,511 new homes within the city in the period 2016-36.

4.6 In response to the challenge of land supply within the City, we are exploring all reasonable options, including seeking a review of the Green Belt to deliver sustainable urban extensions and working in partnership with other Oxfordshire authorities via the Oxfordshire Growth Board, to identify ways of addressing sustainable housing and economic growth for the City.

Work with Oxfordshire Local Authorities

4.7 The Localism Act 2011 places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. In Oxfordshire, all local authorities and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) work to achieve this through the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB).

4.8 The Growth Board has already agreed a ‘working assumption’ of around 15,000 homes to address unmet need for Oxford, and an apportionment of how this figure should be divided between the districts by 2031. See FIG 4.1 for the agreed apportionment. Cherwell District Council (DC), West Oxfordshire DC and the Vale of White Horse DC have included these apportionments in their Local Plans. Work is continuing to ensure that South Oxfordshire DC do likewise.

FIG 4.1 Apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need to be delivered in each Oxfordshire District Authority area - agreed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

7 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate
4.9 All the Oxfordshire authorities are committed to working to meet the housing requirements for Oxfordshire. This has led to a substantial release of land for new housing and employment through the Local Plan process. This has been achievable in part, due to joint working through our Growth Board and working under the auspices of the ‘Duty to Cooperate’ to secure infrastructure funding through Local Growth Fund and City Deals. Over the last 3 years, housing delivery across the County has increased by more than 75%.

FIG 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing completions (net)</th>
<th>Cherwell</th>
<th>Oxford</th>
<th>South Oxfordshire</th>
<th>Vale of White Horse</th>
<th>West Oxfordshire</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>1633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3010</td>
</tr>
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<td>383</td>
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<td>3477</td>
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<td>2683</td>
<td>3035</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.10 The Growth Board is continuing to work on measures to tackle the unmet housing need of Oxford. For example, the Northern Development Arc is proposed through the Partial Review of Cherwell DC’s Local Plan to support the expansion of the Oxford University facility at Begbroke, as well as consolidating the role of the Oxford Parkway Station and also connecting with the Northern Gateway employment site and London-Oxford Airport. This will bring improved public transport, road and cycle routes and substantial affordable housing benefits to Oxford.

4.11 Through the Growth Board, Oxfordshire authorities are now working to develop a countywide assessment of infrastructure requirements (Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy or OxIS) and on the development of a joint spatial plan. The National Infrastructure Study in to the Oxford to Cambridge corridor will make recommendations to Government about the investment in infrastructure needed to boost economic growth and housing delivery. We are also in discussion with Government about a potential place-based deal for Oxfordshire with the aim of bringing additional funding and flexibilities to deliver a step change in house building. Together these would mean that Oxfordshire was
well placed to attract long-term investment to support housing and economic delivery.

4.12 There are a number of more detailed matters which now need to be worked through in relation to provision for Oxford’s unmet housing needs being delivered in adjoining areas, including:

- The mix and balance of dwellings, location and tenure of housing on those sites (which local authority housing policies will be applied in the decision making process)
- The proportion of new homes to be affordable housing and how affordable these will be for Oxford City Council’s housing applicants.
- The arrangements for how the affordable housing units are to be developed, let and managed.
- What partnership and affordable housing allocations policies/nomination arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the housing needs of Oxford are being met on first and subsequent occupancy.

4.13 Oxford City Council is working in partnership with Housing and Planning Officers from other Oxfordshire district authorities on these issues. Best practice and the long-term management of the arrangements will be explored and carefully considered.

**Housing Delivery in Oxford**

4.14 Our current Local Plan sets a target for 400 homes per year to be delivered each year in Oxford. The Council publishes and Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) on an annual basis. This monitors a range of policies, including market and affordable housing delivery against planned projections and considers the changes in the housing market and how these changes influence delivery.

4.15 In 2015/16, 383 (net) new homes were completed in Oxford. This is an increase in housing completions in comparison to recent years.

Of the 383 homes delivered in 2015/16:
- 214 new homes were built on sites of 10 or more dwellings where there is a requirement for on-site provision of affordable homes.
- 132 homes were built on small sites of between 1 and 9 dwelling size.
- 125 units of student accommodation were completed, which are counted as the equivalent to 25 new dwellings.
- 12 units of care home accommodation.
- 164 were provided as new affordable homes (102 social rents and 62 intermediate tenure).
- In addition, the Council secured £375,620 in financial contributions towards affordable housing delivery across Oxford from small sites of 4-9 homes and from student accommodation. This money will be used to provide additional affordable homes across Oxford, to create mixed and balanced communities.

4.16 Housing delivery is dependent on wider housing market conditions and in Oxford, figures are heavily reliant on large schemes which can result in
significant variation year on year, therefore housing delivery is best considered over a longer period of time. Over the last 10 years (2006 to 2016), the total number of new dwellings completed is 3,843 dwellings (net) against a target of 4,000.

**FIG 4.3 Dwellings Delivered/Completed in Oxford 2006 - 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dwellings Completed (net)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>215*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>332*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>383*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,843</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Net additional dwellings completed since the start of the Core Strategy period

*Note: Total completions for the year 2013/14 and later include C3 residential dwellings plus a dwelling equivalent figure for C2 student accommodation and care home rooms to reflect changes introduced in the Planning Practice Guidance in 2014.

4.17 It is anticipated that the remaining 157 homes needed to meet the target will be supplied within the next few years as major schemes such as Barton Park Phase 2 (237 dwellings), Littlemore Park (270 dwellings) and Land North of Littlemore Healthcare Trust (140 dwellings) are built. As mentioned earlier, the City Council is also working in partnership with Nuffield College to develop the Oxpens site which will deliver 300-500 new homes. Another 500 new homes are also planned for the Northern Gateway site and a further 648 homes will be delivered through the second and third phases at Barton Park.

**Fig 4.4 Oxford housing delivery trajectory to 2026**

The housing trajectory estimates the number of homes likely to be built in Oxford during the rest of the Core Strategy Period up to 2026.

Source: Oxford City Council AMR 2015/16
4.18 The blue ‘manage’ line in Fig 4.4 shows the current pipeline of sites (planning permissions and sites allocated or identified for development). Future development will come through the pipeline as more planning permissions are granted and sites identified within the next few years.

4.19 Housing delivery is heavily dependent on wider conditions in the housing market and were, for example, negatively affected by a downturn in the housebuilding industry following the financial crisis of 2008. Any decline in market housing sales or development investment may reduce the delivery of market and affordable housing. Uncertainties created by the UK’s departure from the European Union could impact on mortgage lenders and private investors’ investment plans and potential increases in interest rates could have an impact in the coming years. The recent Housing White Paper (2017) recognised the need for councils and other types of developer to play a greater role in housing delivery to deliver the scale of housing needed and protect delivery from economic downturns.

Providing a mix of dwellings to meet a range of housing needs

4.20 The City Council’s Core Strategy 2026 and Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026, set out what type of housing is required on new housing development sites and puts policies in place to secure the provision of high quality, energy efficient, sustainable and affordable homes. The policies also aim to secure homes that meet a range of needs, including specialist accommodation and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

4.21 In recognition of the severe affordability issues in Oxford, and the need to prioritise affordable housing, the council’s planning policies set out that 50% of the total number of homes provided by a development of 10 units or more should be affordable housing (of which 80% should be social rented accommodation). In line with national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, that rule is subject to viability testing. The councils’ policies include flexibility to negotiate if the developer has evidence that the requirements would make the scheme unviable to ensure that the policy requirements do not have a negative effect on housing delivery in Oxford. For sites that provide less than 10 units, the developer is required to provide a financial contribution towards affordable housing. Again, this is subject to viability testing.

4.22 The Council’s preference is that affordable homes should be provided on site because there are limited opportunities to find suitable alternative sites where a financial contribution can be used to build the additional affordable homes needed. On-site provision also helps ensure mixed and balanced communities in the city.

4.23 Despite the evidence that there is a shortage of larger family homes in Oxford, in recent years there has generally been a trend towards provision of smaller houses and flats, in response to market factors and high land values, which means that developers may continue to maximise the number of units on a site.
4.24 The City Council’s Balance of Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) seeks to secure a mix of accommodation sizes, types and tenure on larger developments in order to create sustainable communities and meet a range of housing needs. The policy seeks to prevent the loss or conversion of much needed family size accommodation in the City (particularly in high density areas). There is also a need for flexibility to ensure that the right size of homes can be provided to meet the needs of different areas of the City.

4.25 In reviewing our Local plan to 2036, we will evaluate the impact of the Balance of Dwellings SPD and ensure that Local Plan policies support the right mix of property types (and tenure) that will maximise the opportunity to support social and economic development across the city.

**Tenure**

4.26 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 placed significant emphasis on broadening home ownership as a means to address the housing problems. However, the Housing White Paper 2017 indicates a change in emphasis towards a wider range of tenures. In particular the White Paper proposes to update the government definition of affordable housing to include:

- social rent (guideline target rents determined by the Government’s rent policy),
- affordable rent (up to 80% of local market rent),
- starter homes (to be sold at 20% discount on open market value, for households with annual incomes less than £80,000),
- discounted market sale housing – sold at least 20% below local market value,
- affordable private rent (at least 20% below local market rent) - suitable for provision of affordable housing as part of Build to Rent Schemes,
- intermediate housing – discounted market sales and affordable private rent housing that is sold or rented at a price that is above social rent but below market levels.

4.27 The new proposed definition of affordable housing places more emphasis on properties that are sold or rented at sub market prices and strengthens the position that eligibility should be determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. It also emphasises that the affordable homes should be affordable in perpetuity.

4.28 Given that the average house price in Oxford is around 16 times the average yearly household income, home ownership is likely to remain out of reach for many people. Therefore our main priority remains to ensure continued access to affordable rented accommodation in Oxford or as close as possible to the City.
4.29 A higher proportion of social rented tenure accommodation is strongly supported as it aims to meet the needs of the majority of those households registered on the Council's Housing Register. However a variety of affordable housing tenures (to include affordable rent and discounted sale in perpetuity) could help to support the development of mixed and balanced communities and also meet a range of social and affordable housing need. Considerations of tenure mix could be considered on a site by site basis and on reflection of local affordable housing demand and supply. In developing the Local Plan 2036, these issues will be explored to ensure that more homes are delivered to meet a range of housing needs in a way that creates mixed, balanced and sustainable communities across the city.

4.30 The calculation of any intermediate tenure of affordable housing should take into account affordability for local people. Where possible, a larger discount could be applied to ensure that eligible households are not expected to pay more than one third of gross median household annual income\(^8\) (based on full time earnings in Oxford) on their rent (and/or mortgage for intermediate tenures). Affordable housing that is secured as affordable in perpetuity is also strongly supported by the City Council given the limitations of developing more affordable homes in the City in the future. We will undertake further affordability testing as part of the policy development for the Local Plan 2036.

**Delivering New affordable homes**

4.31 In 2015/16, the City Council’s affordable homes development programme was buoyant and, along with affordable housing provided by Registered Providers (RPs) and housebuilders, resulted in 166 new affordable homes being completed across the City. However, the delivery of affordable homes can vary considerably year to year because they are dependent on large scale development programmes. For example, because a number of large schemes where completed in the previous year and new developments were in early stages of construction, in 2016/17 there were just 20 new affordable homes completed – all of them provided by Registered Providers as shared ownership homes.

4.32 In 2017/18, we are expecting around 68 affordable homes to be completed, of which 49 will be rented properties and 19 will be shared ownership. Development work is on-going at the Barton Park scheme and the first affordable housing units will be completed early in 2018, with more units coming through in the following years.

4.33 As mentioned earlier, there are major development schemes planned at Barton Park Phases 2 & 3, Littlemore Park, land north of Littlemore Healthcare Trust, Oxpens and Northern Gateway.

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\(^8\) Similar calculation used as part of Oxfordshire SHMA 2014
New affordable homes delivered 2012/13 to 2016/17

FIG 4.5 Oxford estimated affordable housing delivery programme for 2017-23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Units</th>
<th>2017/18</th>
<th>2018/19</th>
<th>2019/20</th>
<th>2020/21</th>
<th>2021/22</th>
<th>2022/23</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total affordable housing</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>2050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social rent</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>1656</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared ownership</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites over 30 units</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>354</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northway Sites</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>Blackbird Leys Central Area</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCH Programme</td>
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<td>122</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Cowley Pool</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littlemore Park</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandford Road</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond Place</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kassam Stadium</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templars Square</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nielsens</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolvercote Paper Mill</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites under 30 units</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment 2016, Planning Records and City Council records)

Development through Registered Providers

4.34 Over the life of this strategy, the pipeline programme of affordable housing provision includes a number of properties to be developed by partner Registered Providers. Registered Providers are interested to maintain their contribution to meeting housing need across the full spread of development opportunities in the City.

4.35 Catalyst Housing Limited will deliver the Temple Cowley Pool redevelopment (24 units) and the Littlemore Park (135 units) over three years. Affordable housing developed as part of the Developers’ S.106 contribution on key development sites such as Oxpens and Northern Gateway, will come forward over the next few years. This will provide opportunities for Registered Providers to secure the affordable housing units on these sites.

4.36 Registered Providers have the skills to deliver a range of development projects, including regeneration programmes and are able to build on the experience and
skills achieved in recent years. They can build for sale and are able to minimise their financial risk from a wider range of development projects.

4.37 Given that Registered Providers hold a significant amount of affordable housing stock in Oxford, the City Council will work with Registered Providers to identify strategic opportunities for making best use of existing assets with a view to any potential redevelopment of sites, re-modelling of units where needed and opportunities for future new development.

**Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL)**

4.38 Recent Government legislation and policy changes have constrained the City Council’s planned investment in improving homes and estates and building new social homes. In response, the City Council has set up a housing company, Oxford City Housing Ltd (OCHL) is wholly owned by the council and will develop properties for sale and rented affordable housing. The initial development programme will provide a total of 162 mixed tenure units by 2019/20, some of which will be developed on Council-owned sites across the city. A sites register has been set up to identify potential redevelopments on Council owned land including where there is potential for site assembly with adjoining land. In addition OCHL will take ownership of 95 homes from the first phase of completions at Barton Park in 2019 and further affordable homes from subsequent phases.

4.39 The Housing Company will facilitate other property acquisitions and better asset management, including S.106 opportunities for regeneration. This will include acquiring larger family dwellings that are often difficult to develop in small schemes. This will help to address long standing needs for additional, affordable, family-sized homes in the short term – especially whilst there are few affordable housing units being completed larger scale sites are at early stage of development.

4.40 OCHL will also purchase high value void properties from the Council that the government has said it will require the council to sell. This will mean they can remain as affordable housing in the longer-term, rather than the units being lost to the ‘open market’ in areas where larger family affordable homes are in high demand.

**Housing Revenue Account Development**

4.41 As noted above, the Council’s ability to directly build affordable housing has been constrained by recent policy changes. However, borrowing allowed within the Housing Revenue Account will allow direct development of some affordable housing. The City Council will provide 8 socially rented units in 2019 with grant from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Additional opportunities to develop affordable housing with the HCA funding will be explored (see Chapter 9 for potential funding opportunities).
Working with employers to meet the needs of the workforce

4.42 In addition to working with Registered Providers to enable the delivery of housing across the City, the City Council is also exploring opportunities with the County Council, Universities, colleges and other public bodies such as Health, to identify new development opportunities on land in their ownership to provide accommodation for their staff. This would support employers in Oxford who are experiencing recruitment and retention issues to proactively plan to help to address the housing needs of their own staff.

4.43 This is one of the considerations being explored as part of development of the Local Plan 2036. However, provision of employment specific housing/staff accommodation should not be a replacement for the provision of social and affordable rented accommodation intended to meet the needs of those households on the Council's Transfer and General Housing Register, or those whose needs cannot be met in any other way.

Community-led Housing

4.44 In 2016, the Government announced that it was providing a total of £60 million funding to support community-led housing developments in the areas where the impact of second homes is particularly acute. Consequently, Oxford City Council was awarded Community-Led Housing Funding for 2016/17. The fund is intended to enable local community groups deliver affordable housing units on mixed sites which are likely to be of little interest to mainstream housebuilders and will thereby contribute to the overall national effort to boost housing supply. It could also help to build collaboration, skills and supply chains at a local level to promote the sustainability of this approach to housebuilding.

4.45 Oxford City Council will use Community-Led Housing funds, allocated in 2016/17, to commission research that will identify the need for, and viability of, providing community-led housing in the City. As part of the research, community groups will be consulted to establish the demand for such housing and the preferred affordable models. In addition, the project will aim to develop information and practical toolkits to inform local communities of the most suitable types of community-led housing schemes for Oxford and how to take projects forward to development, therefore helping to increase the potential pipeline of housing supply in the future.

Self-build Housing Options

4.46 Self-build and custom housebuilding are other potential ways to increase the supply of housing for local people (potentially a more affordable option for those able to afford it). All local authorities are required to keep a register of people who are looking for serviced plots of land to develop for self-build and custom-build projects in their area.

4.47 The City Council’s website provides an opportunity to make an online application to be added to the Oxford’s Self-build and Custom Housebuilding
Register. Information within the Register helps us to understand demand for self-build and custom-build plots in Oxford.  

Options to increase supply/access to housing in Oxford.

4.48 Although improvements are being made, the education attainment levels of Oxford school pupils are below the national average. Therefore the need to attract and retain good quality teaching staff is important to support the continuation of education improvements in the City. To contribute towards facilitating this, the City Council has worked in partnership with Catalyst Housing to provide a Teachers Equity Loan Scheme.

4.49 Between 2015/17, five loans have been approved. £100,000 would be sufficient to provide a further two loans. The Teachers Equity Loan Scheme offer is as follows:
- offer of between 15% – 40% of the total price of the property to be purchased
- the maximum loan available is £75,000
- choose the property you want on the open market
- low interest loan with nothing to pay for 2 years
- an annual interest-only charge of 2.5% in year three
- eligibility: Teachers that are permanently employed in, or have accepted, leadership posts or have two years teaching experience and completed at least 12 months permanent employment in their current approved school.

4.50 Evaluation of this project in 2018/19 will help to identify what impact this project has had on increasing the ability to attract and retain quality teachers in Oxford and therefore contribute towards education attainment.

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5. Prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people

**Priority: Prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people**

- Deliver early intervention actions along with quality, holistic housing advice and effective partnership working to prevent homelessness.
- Reduce rough sleeping and single homelessness through collaborative partnership working and delivery of effective supported housing pathways to help people to sustain their existing accommodation, and to provide accommodation and support for those in housing crisis.
- Continue to reduce the number of homeless households that require emergency or temporary accommodation.

We recognise that to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, we need to work in partnership with a range of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations to secure support for people to manage finances and sustain their existing accommodation, or access an alternative; and to provide accommodation and support for those in housing crisis; working to empower people to secure settled accommodation that can be sustained.

**To prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people we will:**

- Increase the focus on early intervention and preventing homelessness in line with new homelessness duties, supporting and advising people to sustain their accommodation and access services they need.

- Increase Young People’s awareness of housing issues by establishing Homeless Prevention work into curriculum for 15/16 year olds attending Oxford Schools.

- Develop stronger and broader working relations and new partnership approaches with stakeholders to facilitate a collaboratively co-designed City-wide framework and response to preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

- Successfully implement the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer project, investing in early intervention and solutions to prevent households from becoming homeless, including joint work with partners to improve discharges from hospitals or prison.

- Ensure our homelessness services remain among the best in the country, recognised by maintaining the national ‘Gold Standard’.

- Minimise the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by increasing access to longer term housing solutions.
This chapter explores the issues of homelessness in Oxford City and sets out our strategy for dealing with the complex issues at hand and the challenges facing the City Council and its partners in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping in the future.

The Council’s key focus has, and continues to be, to prevent homelessness. Going forward, we envisage this approach will be further strengthened through:

- Increase our focus on early intervention and preventing single homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Ensure provision of an assertive outreach service to provide improved prevention, diversion and reconnection work (No First Night Out), with a rapid assessment focus (No Second Night Out) and personalised services (No Living on the Streets).
- Explore feasible options to accommodate and/or support homeless rough sleepers in the City who have no local connection to the City or anywhere else, and no recourse to public funds.
- Ensure a sufficient and appropriate mix of supported accommodation, with appropriate levels of support to match needs.
- Ensure the provision of an effective pathway of accommodation and specialist housing (including use of the ‘Housing First’ model) to help people move on from hostels to permanent settled housing.
- Reduce evictions from supported housing, especially through more work with partners, including mental health services (No Return to the Streets).
- Work in partnership to support clients to progress through the adult homeless pathway and to maintain settled accommodation with wrap around services, including training and employment initiatives, and effective floating support provision.
- Ensure adequate crisis accommodation, including reviewing winter and severe weather provision.
- Work with the Police, Community Safety and others to tackle unacceptable anti-social behaviour, health and safety risks and criminal activity on Oxford’s streets to improve life for all of Oxford’s residents, safeguard those involved at risk of criminal exploitation and encourage clients to engage with services.
- Actively work to promote and support an ‘Alternative Giving Campaign’ linked to anti-begging initiatives, to raise additional resources for homeless services.
our work under the Trailblazer initiative/programme, and through working within the approaches set out in the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

5.3 Rough sleeping is the starkest form of homelessness and is linked to wider social and health issues which are likely to be exacerbated whilst people are living on the streets. As there are increasing complexities around rough sleeping and single homelessness in Oxford City, especially in relation to individuals who have no local connection, the details of how we intend to work and align our commissioning processes are further explored later in this chapter.

5.4 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have a duty to review homelessness in their local area and formulate a homelessness strategy that will address and prevent homelessness (having regard to its current allocations scheme under section 167 of the Housing Act 1996, and its tenancy strategy under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011). Local Authorities are required to consult with the public, partner statutory and non-statutory agencies, and voluntary sector as appropriate in regard to the strategy and its action plan. The strategy must also be reviewed, kept up to date and a new strategy published within 5 years.

5.5 Oxford City Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 was reviewed in July 2015, and was reviewed again in consultation with partners between March and April 2017 in order to inform the development of this new and combined Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21.

Homelessness – An Overview

5.6 The common perception of homelessness tends to be about individuals seen sleeping rough. However, homelessness is a complex issue which affects individuals and families. There are numerous reasons why people may lose their home and in some circumstances the loss may be through no fault of their own. Homelessness can happen to anyone and it can have devastating effects on many aspects of people’s lives, as well as negative impacts on communities and can create additional burdens on the public purse.

5.7 Not all homeless people live on the street. People may have access to some form of shelter some of the time but lack a stable, long term, settled home. For some people there are frequent moves from one temporary accommodation/shelter to another (e.g. emergency accommodation, refuges, friends’ homes, ‘sofa surfing’). Other households may be living with relatives in overcrowded properties or in unsatisfactory housing.

5.8 Locally, since 2014/15 the most common causes of homelessness (loss of last settled accommodation) for accepted homelessness applications have been the loss of rented accommodation (where the main reason is the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy), followed by family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, then followed by relationship breakdown (more data can be found in Appendix A).
5.9 Underlying vulnerabilities and problems can contribute to the causes of homelessness. Experience of working with customers, statutory and voluntary agencies, tells us that these vulnerabilities can include poor physical or mental health, lack of personal resilience and life skills, unemployment, involvement in crime and poor educational attainment.

5.10 Groups most at risk of homelessness include young people leaving the care of a local authority, those leaving prison, people suffering from domestic violence, those with a mental health problem, those with substance or alcohol misuse problems, those from ‘troubled families’, people on low incomes and those who are in debt. There is a strong overlap between homelessness and social exclusion.

5.11 Preventing homelessness goes further than the keys to the door. Early identification and intervention is important, particularly for vulnerable and young people where there is a need to provide support to help build life skills, independence and the ability to attain and sustain a settled home. Such support and interventions can reduce both repeated homelessness and admissions to institutional care or more supported accommodation.

Homelessness and Partnership Working

5.12 Early identification and prevention of homelessness requires a significant commitment to partnership working. The City Council already has good working arrangements, protocols and procedures in place with a range of partner statutory and voluntary agencies to deliver quality services to tackle and prevent homelessness. However, we would welcome the opportunity to strengthen and broaden partnership working across the City.

5.13 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, places more emphasis on early identification and prevention work in addition to greater administrative and practical burdens in delivering housing services. The Act also introduces a new ‘duty on public authorities to refer cases to the local housing authority’. This should help to enhance partnership arrangements and secure opportunities to share information and take early action to mitigate the risk of homelessness across the City. Work to develop a Champions Network of ‘Homeless Champions’ across a range of partner organisations under the Trailblazer programme should also assist with this. A summary of the main points of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has already been provided in Appendix C, however the full detail of the Act can be found via www.legislation.gov.uk

10 Source: www.legislation.gov.uk - summary as follows:

Section 213B “Duty of public authority to refer cases in England to local housing authority”

- Applies if a specified public authority considers that a person in England in relation to whom the authority exercises functions is or may be homeless or threatened with homelessness – the referring authority must have the person’s agreement to the referral and their consent to be contacted by the local housing authority; they must identify the local housing authority to which the person would like the notification/referral to be made; and the person must also be aware of the reason for the referral e.g. homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- A “public authority” is defined as “a person (other than a local housing authority) who has functions of a public nature.”
5.14 To deliver the objectives of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, we will need to align our service delivery and ensure that there are sufficient resources, skills and expertise to accommodate the additional administrative and operational burdens introduced by the Act.

**Assistance to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness**

5.15 To assist those who are facing homelessness or who are already homeless, Oxford City Council’s dedicated Housing Options Team, offer a broad range and depth of advice and assistance. The team offer advice by telephone as well as a “drop-in” duty service and an emergency out of hours’ telephone service. The work of the team encompasses:

- housing advice and homeless prevention work;
- referrals to debt and money management advice services;
- links with the City Council’s Welfare Reform Team to secure any necessary Discretionary Housing Payments and to enable maximisation of benefits;
- referrals to the tenancy support, homelessness pathway and outreach teams, environmental health and accommodation support team
- liaising with private landlords and family members as well as working with our partners within the NHS, Oxfordshire County Council (including Social Services), Shelter, and the supported housing network; all with an objective to prevent homelessness.

5.16 Homelessness Prevention Funding is used by officers in innovative ways to support customers at risk of homelessness to remain living at home where it is possible and safe to do so. [Fig. 5.1](#) shows in more detail some of the work undertaken in the Housing Options and homelessness prevention customer pathway.

5.17 Where a customer is already homeless at the point of approach to the City Council, the Options Team will undertake the necessary housing need assessments and will place the household in suitable temporary accommodation until housing application investigations are complete, as required by legislation. They will also assist the customer with obtaining the necessary support and will explore housing options and placements into suitable alternative accommodation when it becomes available.

5.18 The Council works hard to ensure that the placement of a household into emergency/ homeless temporary accommodation is a very last resort. The Council seeks to minimise the use of temporary accommodation, recognising that temporary accommodation is often not in the best interests of homeless persons, or their families, and is an expensive activity for the local authority, that could better use funding to secure more positive outcomes for people.

5.19 In accordance with the Housing Act 1996, as amended, if it is considered that Oxford City Council has a duty to accommodate someone, the Housing Options Team would take the following actions:
- Complete an emergency housing application with the customer
- Liaise with the previous landlord/lead household member, from where they were last accommodated
- Liaise with other Council teams in order to provide temporary accommodation and support as needed to individuals and families including links with statutory services and health visitor to support vulnerable households and families placed in temporary accommodation

5.20 The council discharges its duty by helping people access accommodation through authority’s General Housing Register or through working with our Private Rented Sector Team using schemes such as Home Choice, the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, Oxford Rent Guarantee Scheme, Real Lettings Scheme, or/ and liaising directly with private landlords.

5.21 The Council is already committed to homelessness prevention and strive to complete homeless decisions well within the 33 working day target. In the last three years, the number of homelessness prevention cases for the team has been around 1100 per annum. The team proactively works across a range of statutory and voluntary sector partnerships and specialist housing groups e.g. Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Families at Risk of Homelessness, Joint Housing Team, Housing & Homelessness Group etc. The team also has processes, procedures and protocols in place (e.g. Exceptional Circumstances Panel (ECP), Health and Housing Assessment (HAHA) Panel; pre-eviction protocol, discharge into the private rented sector policy; hospital discharge procedure, assessments for Extra Care accommodation; and referrals to agencies for advice and assistance etc.).

5.22 Where necessary and appropriate, housing duty will be discharged under the Localism Act 2011, via an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. Due to the cost of private rents in Oxford, a more affordable offer may be made outside of the administrative area of the City Council. Where the offer is accepted, the Housing Options Team and Private Rented Sector Team will liaise with support workers and agencies to ensure support is provided to those households as they settle into their new environment.

5.23 More information in relation to homelessness presentations and decisions, and the profile of households approaching the Council for assistance is provided in the Appendices A and C.
Use of self-contained Temporary Accommodation (TA) and Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation

5.24 An action within the last Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 was to review the provision of Temporary Accommodation to meet changing needs. This review has been completed and in order to meet demand, the City Council has 133 units of TA at March 2017. 83 units are City Council owned and 50 are private sector leased properties. They include a range of types and sizes and include some with adaptations to meet the needs of homeless households where someone has a disability.

5.25 Recent procurement of TA includes the acquisition of 2, 3, and 4 bed properties and is part of a constant review process to ensure that the Council has an adequate supply of TA to meet needs; that it is of good quality; and that it offers the best possible value for money. As part of this work, the Council is shifting to owning more TA directly, and leasing less from private landlords, investing £10m (using 30% of the funding from Retained Right To Buy receipts) to acquire 39 temporary accommodation units in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

5.26 The City Council has a corporate objective to have no more than 120 households in TA, and this figure is monitored closely every month along with homelessness acceptance figures to identify any trends and take necessary action. The number of households in TA does fluctuate but it has remained at around 120 for the last 4 years despite the upward trend nationally. The provision of 133 TA properties is around 10% more than the corporate objective and this is to allow time for properties to be turned around and maintained to a good standard. This also helps to meet fluctuations in homelessness most of the time and to minimise the use of B&B while balancing against the cost of maintaining this level of TA.

5.27 Demand from larger families requiring TA has increased in the last year mainly due to the impact of Welfare Reform and the families effectively being priced out of the Private Rented Sector in the City (and neighbouring areas), therefore it has not been possible to prevent their homelessness. TA voids are turned around as quickly as possible (sometimes on the same day) to maximise availability of the units to those in need. B&B accommodation is never used as a homelessness prevention option and is only used as a last resort. Where families are placed in B&B this is a short term arrangement and for no longer than 6 weeks in line with legislative requirements.

5.28 To ensure there is sufficient throughput from TA and to avoid the use of B&Bs, an Annual Lettings Plan is produced each year as part of the Allocations Scheme. This estimates the number of social and affordable rented properties expected to become available based on previous lettings performance and expected new builds. Allocation targets are set to determine the proportion of social housing offered to those on the Housing Register including the homeless. Performance against the targets is monitored every month and offers are prioritised to the homeless when required.
Homelessness and Domestic Abuse

5.29 To assist customers who have experienced domestic abuse (DA), Oxfordshire’s DA services have developed over the last 15 years, a comprehensive model of support to victims of DA. Numbers of DA reports are highest in the City due to its urban concentration but DA is an offence that occurs across all communities in the county. A strategic review of DA services was undertaken in 2016 and set out a number of recommendations. The service is supported via a range of budget streams and so decisions about future funding of them and implementation of the strategic review recommendations are being discussed with input from the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership and local Community Safety Partnerships. In the interim, the City Council will continue to deliver appropriate housing advice, assistance and signposting to relevant services (and access to accommodation should crisis occur) for those experiencing DA. In addition to close liaison with the Police and other statutory agencies to prevent homelessness through DA, the City Council also provides a Sanctuary Scheme and ‘Target Hardening’ scheme to help keep people safe in their home should they wish to remain there.

Homelessness and Mental Health

5.30 The City Council continues to support housing customers who have a mental health concern by providing advice and assistance, and referring to other support services through the specialist Mental Health Practitioners and supported housing providers. Discussions with these services to improve access to accommodation and support will continue. As the Government is proposing to review the Mental Health Act 1983 with a view to replacing it with a new Mental Health Treatment Bill, we will continue to monitor any legislative changes and amend our policies accordingly with the issue of government guidance. 

Early intervention and homelessness prevention through education facilities

5.31 Education of young people in schools about housing and homelessness issues (including street homelessness) can help to prevent homelessness in the long term. The Housing Team, in collaboration with the Communities Team and young people attending Oxford high schools, is in the process of developing new and improved ways of communicating with young people to raise their awareness of homelessness and associated issues of anti-social behaviour, poor education, and poor employment opportunities, all of which all have a significant impact upon our communities’ sustainability.

Co-location of advice services

5.32 To assist customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to receive appropriate advice, and to ensure effective referral systems are in place for this, some advice and support services such as the Citizens Advice Bureau

http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/05/08/conservatives-pledge-scrap-flawed-mental-health-act
and Shelter are co-located or make use of the offices available in the City Council’s primary offices in St Aldates Chambers.

**Gold Standard for Homelessness Services**

5.33 In order to ensure that the City Council’s whole package of housing and homelessness services, processes and procedures were efficient and being provided to good standard, an objective was set in the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 for Oxford City Council to be assessed as Gold Standard in the National Practitioner Support Service ‘Gold Standard Challenge’.

5.34 Developed as a result of the “Making every contact count” report published in 2012 by the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) on Homelessness, the Gold Standard Challenge is a local authority sector-led peer review scheme, designed to help local authorities deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. The scheme, aimed at supporting local authorities to improve their frontline housing services and increase opportunities for early intervention and prevention of homelessness, has been developed by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) in consultation with voluntary sector and local authority partners.

5.35 In March 2017, the Housing Team submitted its 10th and final challenge for assessment and was subsequently awarded the ‘Gold Standard’, putting Oxford City Council in the top 3% of all Local Authorities in England to have achieved this award.

5.36 We will continue to monitor the delivery of our housing and homelessness prevention services in line with national benchmarking standards such as the Gold Standard Challenge. Should any new ‘challenges’ be developed as a result of new legislation, or Government guidance, we will commit to undertaking those new challenges within the life of this strategy. We will also continue to undertake training, research and share best practice to ensure that our service remains dynamic and fit for purpose.
### The Gold Standard Challenge includes the following 10 Local Challenges:

| 1. | To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services |
| 2. | To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs |
| 3. | To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice |
| 4. | To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative |
| 5. | To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support |
| 6. | To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord |
| 7. | To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme |
| 8. | To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs |
| 9. | To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation |
| 10. | To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks |

### In 2016, the Government embarked on an ambitious programme, working with local areas and across Government, to go further and faster with reform and develop innovative new approaches to preventing homelessness. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) set about establishing a network of ambitious homelessness prevention Trailblazer areas across England. Trailblazer areas will carry out prevention activity at the earliest point and with a wider group of people – not just those who are owed the statutory duty or in priority need. To facilitate early intervention and solutions to prevent households from becoming homeless, DCLG made £20m Trailblazer funding available for 2016/17, 2017/18 & 2018/19.
5.39 Oxford City Council has led on the preparation and submission of a successful Oxfordshire bid for Trailblazer funding. The bid was supported by other Oxfordshire Local Authorities, and partners to the bid also included Oxfordshire County Council, Health, Probation, Children’s Trust Board, and a wider provider network of Voluntary and Community Agencies and local GP practice. The bid for £790,000 Trailblazer funding has been approved by the DCLG for the period 2016-2019 and work has begun on delivering the project and achieving the expected homelessness prevention outcomes outlined within the bid documentation.

5.40 The aim is for this project to be flexible and deliver dynamic responses to meet changing needs. With a rolling programme of data capture, monitoring of outcomes, and evaluation of activities, this project should deliver real learning and opportunities to share best practice with DCLG and wider housing and homelessness service providers. The project proposes three work streams set out below:

- **Targeted Upstream Prevention**
  - Local outreach workers across all Oxon district council areas delivering enhanced prevention
  - Actively seeking out those who may be become at risk
  - Finding out more about triggers for homelessness, e.g. evictions, family breakdown
  - Find out where people seek help and ‘target’ - health/prisons or elsewhere?

- **Resilience Services**
  - Commissioned ‘hub’ services including a range of offers
  - Personal asset based mentoring to give longer term resilience to homelessness triggers
  - Social Networking
  - Financial Resilience
  - Employability & Purpose
  - Behavioural change

- **Homeless Champions Network**
  - Added value from co-operation across key services esp health and criminal justice
  - Homeless liaison to support key partner agencies in case assessments and discharge planning
  - Legacy of a trained network of homeless champions, supported by housing teams
  - Strategic Discharge Policy

5.41 The project in Oxfordshire is aimed at:

- Homelessness relating to non-statutory single people – with an initial focus on persons 18 to 35 years old and vulnerable
- Targeted households identified as at risk of homelessness (whole household or/and members within it)
- Other groups identified following evaluation and data collection throughout the project.

5.42 As the lead authority, Oxford City Council will also be facilitating a steering group to inform the project throughout its lifecycle. We are committed to continue to implement and support the Trailblazer project in line with the funding bid brief.

**Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness in Oxford City**

5.43 Rough sleeping and the impact of the wider street population have an effect on everybody living in or visiting Oxford City.
People sleeping rough die younger (Homelessness Kills, Crisis 2012), suffer ill-health and are more vulnerable to violence than those in the wider population. It also impacts on business, residents and tourists through begging, street drinking and other anti-social behaviour.

This chapter sets out the issues for Oxford City around Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness. It also identifies the work already underway to identify rough sleepers, reduce the number of people rough sleeping, provide or plan support for them and what the potential challenges are for the City Council in the future.

According to Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), a person sleeping rough is defined as:

“People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”).

Oxford City Council, as well as all other local authorities in the country, uses this definition when submitting a single figure to central government of the number of rough sleepers following a street count. This definition is used in order to make comparisons with other national data but the City Council’s work covers a much broader breadth than just those living and sleeping on the city’s streets. The Council’s work includes ensuring there is assistance and support in place for all those, predominately single people, who are homeless and where there is not likely to be a statutory homeless responsibility. This could also include, for example, those at risk of rough sleeping and those currently supported in hostels who were previously sleeping rough.

Official street counts and estimates of rough sleepers

The City Council’s official street count – counting the number of rough sleepers seen bedded down on one specific night – in November 2016 was 33, a slight decrease from 39 in November 2015. However, overall there has been a 175% increase in the number of rough sleepers since 2012.

The City Council also carries out an estimate of rough sleepers which is monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB). Oxford City’s estimate of rough sleepers in 2016 was 47, compared to 17 in Cherwell, 7 in South Oxfordshire, 8 in the Vale of White Horse and 0 in West Oxfordshire. The HWB target was not to exceed the baseline rough sleeping County-wide estimate for the previous year, which was 90 in 2015. The actual figure for the County in 2016 was 79. This was below the baseline, but 79 is a very high number for the County.
Local connection

5.50 Supported accommodation commissioned by the local authority is prioritised for those in need and with a local connection\(^{12}\) to the local authority. This is a national approach, and should a local authority do otherwise in this environment, there is a high risk that a large number of people from across the country, without a local connection to that local authority would go there, or be referred from other areas of the country (particularly those that offered fewer services). This would result in that local authority facing disproportionate burdens and cost – a burden that would fall on local tax-payers.

5.51 Work in this area remains complex and challenging with 57% of the City’s 2016 street count figure not having an identifiable connection to any one of the local authorities in Oxfordshire. 12% of the City’s street count had an identifiable local connection to one of the other district councils in the County. In many cases due to the chaotic and transient nature of rough sleeping, many don’t have a tangible connection to anywhere, making access to support services and accommodation very difficult.

5.52 The Council intends to continue to apply a ‘local connection’ approach to all its commissioned services, and will operate a reconnection service for persons that have a better local connection to another area, reconnecting clients to

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\(^{12}\) In order for an individual to access supported accommodation for single homeless/rough sleepers in Oxford, they need to have a local connection as set out in the City’s Allocations Scheme or fulfil the criteria for a ‘pathway connection’. A pathway connection is a less strict set of criteria than the Allocations Scheme that seeks to establish if the individual has a connection to Oxford, generally through having resided in (rough sleeping excluded) Oxford for a period of time, working in Oxford or having close family in Oxford. The introduction of the pathway connection recognises that homeless and vulnerable people sometimes live chaotic and unsettled lives, but that this should not block access the emergency housing that is provided through homeless accommodation.
services in those areas for help and assistance. As the commissioning of many local services moves from County provision to City provision, some of this reconnection work may now also take place within Oxfordshire, as well as beyond it.

5.53 There remains a concern about those who have no local connection to Oxford or anywhere, and who have no recourse to public funds but who are homeless and sleeping rough on Oxford’s streets. Therefore we will need to explore what the options are to feasibly accommodate and/or support those individuals to ensure that they no longer need to sleep on the City’s streets.

Oxford’s Rough Sleeper Profile

5.54 Over the last 5 years, the City Council has developed, implemented and reviewed a “No Second Night Out” approach in the City, to ensure that there is a rapid intervention for those who sleep rough for the first time and there is quick access to accommodation to avoid slipping into a street lifestyle. An average 68% of those new to rough sleeping are only seen sleeping rough once as they are either swiftly accommodated, return home or find their own solution. The principles of No Second Night Out remain a priority but the approach has been assimilated into business as usual for the Outreach Team.

5.55 Of greater concern are the numbers of people already known to services and who are continuously and intermittently seen rough sleeping, demonstrating that they are moving into and continuously falling out of housing (including the adult homeless pathway). An average of 61% of those seen sleeping rough in each quarter by the Outreach Team in 2015/16 and 2016/17 were already known to services. In 2016/17, of the 233 people who left the adult homeless pathway accommodation (external move), 23.6% returned to rough sleeping.

5.56 Improving both the quality of support within supported housing provision and developing bespoke and appropriate provision will be a strategic priority going forward.

Support needs

5.57 There has been a marked increase in the number of people sleeping rough and assessed by the Outreach Team (Oxford SPOT) as having multiple support needs over the last few years. This shows that the client group Oxford SPOT work with is very complex and needs support from a number of different services in order to successfully end their rough sleeping and homelessness. A large proportion of those assessed had mental health support needs, often in addition to other support needs. See Appendix A.

Current accommodation-based services

5.58 Significant re-commissioning by Oxfordshire County Council of housing-related support services took place in autumn 2015, with a total of 286 beds of supported accommodation re-commissioned across the County. 252 of those beds were based in the City. However, the main change of that provision was the closure of the 61-bed homeless hostel at Lucy Faithful House. Those 61
beds were replaced by the same amount of units in dispersed housing (shared housing).

5.59 In February 2016, the County Council also made the decision to cut Housing Related Support by 100%, with a phased reduction to funds starting in April 2017. To mitigate some of the impact of these cuts, the City Council together with District Councils, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Commissioning Group agreed during autumn 2016, to contribute to a pooled budget and enter into joint commissioning arrangements for a period of 3 years. The 3-year pooled budget is just under £3m and will therefore fund significantly less supported accommodation than has been available in the past. The following diagram FIG 5.3 shows accommodation available for the city.
### Fig 5.3 Homelessness Hostel and Supported Accommodation in Oxford

The following accommodation is available for the City from 1st April 2017 and funded from the pooled budget:

#### Year 1 2017/18 – transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Beds</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>City/Districts until</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O’Hanlon House</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Complex/assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27 beds – City (7-10 assessment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Remaining beds for other District’s use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon House</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Complex/abst./progression</td>
<td>Shared provision City/Districts until de-commissioning 1st April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Progression/move-on</td>
<td>Shared provision City/Districts, moving to City only 1st April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayday Trust</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Complex/progression/move-on</td>
<td>Shared provision City/Districts, moving to City only 1st April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayday Trust</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Complex/progression</td>
<td>Shared provision, not part of pooled budget from 1st April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>High/medium and medium/low need</td>
<td>City funded until 31st March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing First and Acacia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Year 2 2018/19 and Year 3 2019/20

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Accommodation</th>
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<tr>
<td>O’Hanlon House</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayday Trust</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing First and Acacia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayday Trust</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Complex/progression</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/complex need</td>
<td>20/25</td>
<td>To be commissioned to start 1st April 2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

- City provision
- Shared provision

*OCC = Oxford City Council*
5.60 Housing First and Acacia are specialist supported accommodation projects that have successfully been developed over the life of the City Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2013-18, under the objective to ‘ensure sufficient specialist accommodation and support to meet the needs of single homeless clients in the City’. In addition, Emmaus Oxford and Edge Housing provide 28 single rooms for homeless people in their community.

5.61 For details of the Adult Homelessness Pathway accommodation and access routes see Fig 5.4.

Moving On from the Pathway

5.62 Moving on from the supported housing pathway is difficult due to the lack of suitable and affordable private rented sector housing as well as social housing, and this remains a challenge. Improving access to both these housing sectors is a theme that runs through this entire Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

5.63 Over the life of the previous Homelessness Strategy 2013-18, we have developed an ethical landlord model in partnership with a number of faith-based groups. Although in its infancy, the model looks to lease accommodation at the Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) rate whilst also providing a low level of support as people move off the pathway. The City Council aims to further develop this model going forward. However, County Council cuts to floating support services may impact on the design and delivery of any model, especially where there is a requirement for floating support to continue for longer periods in order to sustain accommodation.

5.64 Data gathered as part of the City Council’s Move-on Protocols also indicates that whilst actual numbers are relatively low, we need to focus on improving access to treatment-based services and units that are disability adapted, as well as improving the relationship between the mental health and homelessness pathways and those who need long-term care.

Other Services and Partnership Working

5.65 Accommodation however is only one aspect of the support that rough sleepers need to rebuild their lives. Consequently, in addition to the Street Population Outreach Team and a range of supported accommodation, the City also provides funding (in part or whole) for a broad range of other services to provide specialist, wrap-around support including: severe weather provision; specialist police officers; day services; tenancy sustainment workers; welfare reforms teams; mental health practitioners and services that provide education, employment and training opportunities.

5.66 For more details of all services commissioned by Oxford City Council using Homelessness Prevention Funds in 2017/18, see the report presented to the City Executive Board meeting on 9 March 2017, available on the City Council’s website: [http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s35032/Report_Allocation%20of%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Funds%20201718.pdf](http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s35032/Report_Allocation%20of%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Funds%20201718.pdf)
**Fig 5.4 Adult Homeless Pathway (provision for Oxford City)**

**Priority One**
No Second Night Out
Newly verified rough sleepers with high support needs

**Priority Two**
No Living on the Streets
Returning/Entrenched verified rough sleepers with high support needs

**Priority Three**
No First Night Out
Soon to be homeless with high support needs – must apply to Pathway Coordination

**7-10 Assessment Beds** (at O'Hanlon House)
Target stay is max of 4 weeks. Once assessed as Complex (C), Complex Progression (CP), Progression, (P) Progression Move On (PMO), Move On (MO) or Abstinence (A) clients will receive a ‘Single Service Offer’ to one of the following services, or moved off the pathway.

- **Simon House** (to be decommissioned 1st April 2018, all provision shared between Districts until then)
  - 20 Complex
  - 20 Complex Progression
  - 12 Abstinence

- **O'Hanlon House** (all 24 hour staffing)
  - 17-20 Complex

- **Mayday**
  - 20 Complex Progression
  - 10 Progression/Move on

- **Connection**
  - 31 Progression

- **Project 41** (OxHoP, start 1st June 2017)
  - 41 mix of high/med and med/low support need

**Off the Homeless Pathway**
After 6-9 months a ‘Single Move On Offer’ to move off the Pathway should be made e.g. to Private Rented Sector, social housing, friends and family, therapeutic services etc.
Future strategic priorities in relation to rough sleeping and single homelessness

Preventing Homelessness and Responding to Rough Sleeping

5.67 Oxford is fortunate in that it has a caring and tolerant population and many people want to help people sleeping rough through supporting charitable work or making personal donations.

5.68 The City Council is keen to harness this good-will and energy and would like to develop a consistent city-wide approach to preventing and ending rough sleeping including commissioners, providers of services, charities, the Universities, faith groups, students, members of the public and those with lived experience of homelessness. The City Council would like to start a conversation with all of these groups, working within the principles of collaboration and co-design, to explore new possible work-streams including establishing a stakeholder/ partnership forum, commissioning and researching, and considering restructured and new approaches. We envisage this could potentially lead to a Homelessness Charter or a framework document for the City which would support an agreed commitment across all stakeholders, including the Council, to tackle rough sleeping and its associated complexities.

5.69 The City Council, in line with the countywide Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer initiative, will also continue to develop methods of early identification, intervention and prevention of homeless as this should reduce the number of individuals who resort to sleeping rough through loss of settled accommodation.

Rapid assessment and reconnection

5.70 If someone finds themselves sleeping on the streets, it is essential that services engage with them as quickly as possible to get people at risk off the streets and prevent them becoming fully immersed in street life with its additional risks.

5.71 Different multi-agency approaches are needed to respond to the needs of different groups of people sleeping rough. Therefore the City Council will:

- Using the principles of No Second Night Out, No First Night Out and No Return to the Streets, continue to improve its rapid assessment, diversion opportunities, and access to accommodation and/or reconnection to get new arrivals away from the streets quickly.
- Continue to work in partnership to ensure that reconnections are safe and sustainable.
- Develop asset-based relationships with those who are chronically homeless and who frequently return to the streets, and obtain a commitment from organisations to work holistically, flexibly and in a highly personalised way to move people away from street-based lifestyles.
- Continue to look at solutions for those who have no recourse to public funds.
Provision of a pathway of accommodation as well as specialist supported housing.

5.72 In light of Oxfordshire County Council’s funding cuts, the City Council will need to reassess (over the duration of this strategy) its approach and priorities in terms of a pathway of accommodation. Funding sufficient supported accommodation from 1st April 2018 onwards is a priority for the City Council and will require significant reprioritisation of the Homelessness Prevention Funds to make that happen.

5.73 The details of future re-commissioning plans will emerge over time but the City Council will focus on:

- Maximising the supply of supported accommodation to meet demand.
  - It is estimated that Oxford City needs 150 beds in order to meet demand. As mentioned earlier, the pooled budget arrangement will fund 79 beds for City use. Therefore, the City Council needs to fund an appropriate number of units of supported accommodation through its own commissioning to provide the units required. In Year 1 – 2017, the City has already prioritised the re-commissioning of 41 units which are to be lost from Julian Housing. This project commenced on 1st June 2017 and is called Project 41, providing a range of housing in shared and dispersed properties for people who require high-medium and medium-low housing support.

- Providing an appropriate mix of accommodation from sit-up services to move-on provision that can meet a broad range of need, be of high quality, bespoke and flexible over time to meet changing demands.
  - This work will include improved working with mental health commissioners to provide relevant support service and provision for clients with chaotic lifestyles and complex needs. A specific focus in the first year will be on additional city provision following the closure of Simon House in March 2018.

- Embracing innovation, new ways of working and new partnerships, and explore the use of empty buildings and guardianship models, rolling winter shelters and a reformed approach to severe weather provision.

- Researching good practice both in the UK and internationally to inform our thinking around dispersed and bespoke housing solutions as we move away from the provision of large, institutionalised hostels.

- Remaining committed and focussed on developing suitable and affordable move-on accommodation options.

Partnership and joint working between different support agencies

5.74 Providing housing will not be the solution to everyone’s homelessness. There is a limit to the support that can be provided by staff working to deliver housing related support. As mentioned earlier, there has been an increase in the level of support needs that rough sleepers and single homeless people display.
Therefore it is key that specialist support and floating support can, and is available for all who need it to address their homelessness.

5.75 Further cuts to floating support services could result in more people being unable to remain living independently and sustaining their accommodation. Consequently, those households are more likely to fall into homelessness and if they do, will need more support from various statutory agencies to find suitable supported accommodation. Therefore, the City Council will need to participate in any Countywide discussions and work related to the re-commissioning of floating support services.

5.76 The Council wants to work together with support agencies, in particular other statutory agencies, to make sure that each individual who needs more specialist support has a co-ordinated approach to their support and care.

A Safe City for everyone

5.77 Whilst the street population is often associated with anti-social behaviour and crime, it is estimated that half of those on the streets are actually housed. The street population is diverse and includes rough sleepers, street drinkers, people who are begging, people creating anti-social behaviour, people who are insecurely housed in hostels and unsuitable accommodation such as squats, and those who spend a lot of time in street-based activities which have a negative impact on other members of the public.

5.78 To help make sure people sleeping rough, businesses, residents and visitors are safe and free from intimidation, the City Council will work in partnership with a range of internal and external stakeholders to focus on preventing harm and promoting appropriate behaviour. This strategy recognises that support, focussed on the needs and complexity of the individual, is more likely to result in an effective solution and sustainable move away from street life rather than the blanket use of enforcement.

- The initial focus of work will be to work with street drinkers and drug users to support people into treatment and reduce their street presence and any associated anti-social behaviour.
- As a last resort, and where offers of support have not been successful, the local authority and the police will explore the use of various legislations to engage with appropriate support services and to deal with issues of aggressive begging.
- The Council will also promote alternatives to discourage all forms of begging by developing relevant communications that aim to sustain and embed an alternative response to begging as well as an alternative giving scheme.

5.79 Overall, a priority for the City Council will be to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in the City through a range of appropriate early interventions, prevention activities and the provision of support to those at risk of, and who are already entrenched in, rough sleeping and a continuous cycle of street homelessness.
6. Making best use of private sector accommodation

Priority: Make best use of private sector accommodation

- Bring empty properties back into use within the City – both residential dwellings and commercial buildings.
- Improve access to homes available to rent in the private sector for people receiving low incomes.
- Improve the condition of homes in the private sector by working with private sector landlords and actively enforcing standards for private rented housing; improving energy efficiency; and managing the impact on neighbourhoods of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

To Make Best Use of Private Sector Accommodation we will:

- Prevent homelessness by continuing to advise home owners who are in financial difficulty and who are at risk of mortgage repossession, of the help available to them.

- Review the impact and the social investment (via the National Homelessness Property Fund) of the Real Lettings Scheme and also the Rent Guarantee Scheme to ensure effective outcomes and value for money. Lessons learned from evaluation processes can help to inform future investment or change.

- Run publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the support offered by the City Council to private landlords when letting their property and promote the private rented sector (PRS) as a housing option.

- Monitor and report on the impact of Government policy changes on affordability and access to suitable and affordable accommodation in the PRS so that MPs, Councillors and Government are aware of the issues.

- Improve the condition of homes in the private sector by working with private sector landlords and actively enforcing standards for private rented housing; improving energy efficiency; and managing the impact on neighbourhoods of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

To Bring Empty Properties into Use we will:

- To reduce the number of empty dwellings in the city and therefore increase the availability of much needed accommodation, the Council will take appropriate informal and formal action to bring empty dwellings back into use.

- Investigate the number of empty commercial buildings in the City and where appropriate, their potential for development opportunities. Subject to sites being suitable for change of use or redevelopment (in line with any planning requirements), the Council will develop processes and procedures (within the life of this strategy) to take appropriate informal or formal action to bring them back into use.
6.1 We have looked at the supply of new housing provided via development opportunities and also the demand for housing and affordable housing across Oxford. It is clear, from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014, the City Council’s Housing register and lettings data, that the demand for housing, particularly for social rented housing, outstrips the turnover and supply of Council and Registered Provider-owned stock. As a result, the City Council endeavours to use its available resources to facilitate the prevention of homelessness and improve access to accommodation in the private sector as well to meet housing needs.

6.2 This chapter considers the ways in which we can reduce the risk of homelessness for owner occupiers; the challenges in the future relating to the roll out of Universal Credit (UC); and the work we are doing/plan to do to maximise access to the Private Rented Sector as an alternative option to social or affordable housing.

**Home Owners and potential mortgage repossession**

6.3 In 2016, 24 mortgage possession claims were issued in Oxford\(^\text{13}\). Mortgage possession claims went up to 204 in 2008, but the figure has reduced considerably since then (Appendix A), mainly due to improved responsibilities for mortgage lenders, and additional help available to home owners at risk of losing their homes due to mortgage debt.

6.4 In order to help prevent homelessness due to mortgage repossessions, a member of the Housing Options team acts as a champion for mortgage repossession cases and deals directly with the notifications received from mortgage lenders. On receipt of a notification, the officer will send out a letter to the home owner (debtor), signposting them to the relevant advice and information, including the Court Desk Services for legal advice and the Debt and Mortgage Advice leaflet and other information published on the City Council’s website. The City Council has undertaken proactive publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the help available to home owners and the opportunity to seek money and debt advice at a very early stage to prevent home loss. Oxford City Council refers individuals in mortgage debt to a specialist Citizens Advice Bureau money advisor. The service is available to Housing Options customers or customers who are in contact generally with other members of the Housing Team. In the past two years there have been 31 notifications from mortgage lenders and of these, 3 have come back to the Housing Options team for advice and assistance.

6.5 To help reduce the risk of home owners from losing their homes, it is important to continue the work we are doing e.g. proactive information campaigns and advising home owners of the help that is available should they be in financial difficulty and at risk of mortgage repossession.

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\(^{13}\) Ministry of Justice [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
Working with Private Landlords and challenges of Universal Credit

6.6 People on low incomes are finding it increasingly difficult to access the private rented sector, at a time when there is more reliance on the sector to meet housing need in Oxford.

6.7 The Government has introduced a raft of tax, lending and regulation measures affecting the private rented sector, focused mainly but not exclusively on changes to benefit and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates e.g. introduction of benefit caps, extending the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) to single people under 35, and freezing LHA rates for 4 years. The roll out of Universal Credit for families is planned to begin across Oxfordshire in 2017/18 which means that payment of the housing element of Universal Credit will be reduced and/or paid direct to applicants rather than landlords.

6.8 Although the PRS has expanded significantly in recent years, access to the sector remains severely restricted for low income families. The private agents/landlords surveyed by the City Council in 2016, were generally reluctant to rent to people in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) with only five per cent of landlords indicating a willingness to rent. A proportion of these would only do so through a home-owning guarantor with a gross income 30 times the monthly rent for the property, leaving just 3 per cent of landlords with property available on the open market to let to tenants who are receiving HB.

6.9 Research indicates the key characteristics of the Oxford private rented sector (PRS) market are:

- Over 28% of households are living in PRS accommodation - highest concentration in St Marys ward at 52% and lowest in Blackbird Leys at 9%. (Census 2011)
- Rental cost rises at 3% per year (at lower end of market) have outpaced the rise in incomes. (Valuation Office Agency)
- It is estimated that over half of household income is now spent on rent in the PRS, supporting the view that Oxford is one of the least affordable cities to live in UK. (Oxford Profile Statistics 2016 [www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk))
- It is estimated that 15% of all homes in the PRS in Oxford have at least one serious hazard (2% below national average) and we anticipate this figure will continue to fall as part of the interventions carried out by the Council in the PRS through enforcement and the delivery of the licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation. (Oxford City Council data)
- It is estimated that a quarter of landlords still do not comply with deposit protection laws. [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)
- £40.4 million was spent on Housing Benefit in 2016/17 on Private Tenants (Private Tenants include: Private landlords/Housing Associations/Hostels/ Registered Charities and voluntary organisations) many rents were topped up by Discretionary Housing Payments (Oxford City Council data).
6.10 Tenants in Oxford were surveyed and their responses revealed that in their experience, Landlords were reluctant to rent to benefit claimants. No recent lets of properties (2016/17) have been secured through the Home Choice scheme at LHA rates, and only twenty six new lets have been secured within the City compared with 41 outside the district. This again, is due to affordability.

6.11 Government policy appears to be compounding rather than mitigating the difficulties faced by benefit claimants trying to enter the private rented sector. Around two thirds of landlords reported that loss of direct payment of Housing Benefit under Universal Credit (UC) was making them less willing to rent to benefit claimants, while a similar proportion of those currently renting to these tenants, reported only doing so if the housing element of UC is paid to the landlord. It is expected that many vulnerable people would be eligible for payment direct to the landlord, and a take up campaign to make landlords aware of this is planned. This is in direct tension with Government policy to pay directly to the tenant which, in most cases is a measure designed to promote greater responsibility. Around half of the agents surveyed by the City Council reported that changes in LHA rates and the four year freeze on any increases made some landlords unwilling to rent to HB claimants, and nearly half of those said the reduction in LHA rates was deterring them from doing so.

6.12 Recent taxation changes and increased regulation (such as immigration checks) also affected landlord’s willingness to rent to HB claimants along with mortgage lender restrictions and higher insurance premiums. Difficulties finding accommodation that could be rented at LHA rates in Oxford was also an issue. To mitigate perceived risks, some landlords now require two months deposit, at least one month’s rent in advance, and some also want the security of rent guarantors and credit references. Such up-front costs, in addition to agency fees, act as a barrier to HB tenants accessing the PRS. It remains to be seen what the impact will be of the Government’s proposals to prohibit agency fees and whether this will result in better access to the PRS or higher rent charges.

6.13 Given all of this, the City Council should monitor and report on the impact of Government policy changes on affordability and access to suitable and affordable accommodation in the PRS so that MPs, Councillors and Government are aware.
Council support to help access private sector accommodation

6.14 Currently the City Council operates a Home Choice Scheme to assist vulnerable homeless households to access the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Where the Council is likely to have a statutory duty to a household representing themselves as in need of housing, the Home Choice Scheme is considered as one of the housing options to aid homelessness prevention (Localism Act 2011, discharge of duty). This Scheme includes financial incentives of two months’ rent and deposit loan, and fees paid can include the following standard landlord and tenant offers:

- direct payment to landlords
- permission to share information with landlords
- dedicated expert Housing Benefit (HB) Officers for fast processing of HB claims
- digital and hard copy tenancy booklets for Landlords and Tenants
- a named contact within the City Council to problem solve tenancy issues
- free property search portals in offices
- free Tenant Ready training courses offered to tenants
- free Landlord training sessions for joining the Landlord Accreditation Scheme run by the City Council
- make deposits, rent in advance payments and other incentives to bridge the gap between LHA and contractual rent
- help with relocation costs and support for out of city moves where needed
- signposting to other support agencies who are able to help the tenant with employment, money and energy advice
- promotion of the landlord ‘offer’ targeted at landlords inclined to let to tenants receiving HB (ethical and experienced medium size portfolio holders).

6.15 Wherever reasonably practicable we secure lets in the City. However, with gaps between rent and LHA rates growing wider in Oxford (gaps of between £212 for one bed to £784 for four bed homes), this is proving to be increasingly challenging and consequently some families in receipt of HB have accepted offers of suitable and affordable housing in areas outside (but as close as reasonably practical to) Oxford.

6.16 In order to provide suitable options and facilitate access to properties in the private rented sector, the City Council also offers the following:

- **Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee scheme** - designed for non-statutory homeless people offering one month’s Deposit bond and limited rent in advance.
- **Rent Guarantee scheme** – Two-year pilot scheme to run to 2019. Provides a guarantee of rent to the landlord, three months’ rent in advance whilst the tenant also has a tailored package of support by the dedicated Housing Coach to find ways for the tenant to pay the top up between Housing Benefit and contractual rent (with the aim to become financially independent in the longer term). The overall aim is to source and let 40 homes p.a. in Oxford. For more information on the scheme offer see the
City Executive Board report dated 15 September 2016\textsuperscript{14} The City Council's website provides more information about what this offer includes: 
\url{www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20114/landlords_and_agents/1219/rent_guarantee_service}

- **Real Lettings** - a two year £10m joint venture with a non-profit making organisation and St Mungo’s, to acquire 50 buy to let properties offered to rent at LHA rates in Oxfordshire. Tenancies come with low level support to enable tenants to move on independently after two or three years.

- **Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (and Vulnerable Children scheme)** – A Government funded relocation package for up to 20 families by end of 2017. Enhanced offer to guarantee rent was required to attract landlords. 20 families have successfully settled and seeking to taper support to end by 2021.

- **Hostel move-on for Singles** - specially designed scheme mirroring the Home Choice offer for homeless pathway clients.

6.17 These schemes, especially the Rent Guarantee and purchase of Real Lettings properties will need to be evaluated within the life of this strategy to fully understand the impact of the schemes on individual households and if they are value for money. Lessons learned from evaluation processes can help to inform future investment or change.

**Problems in Private Sector Housing**

6.18 The Private Sector Housing Policy sets out how the Council will work with landlords to license Houses in Multiple Occupation, maintain housing standards across private sector homes and what action can/will be taken to ensure sustainable renting in the private sector. The Council’s Tenancy Relations Officer provides an important service to assist private tenants and landlords in relation to dealing appropriately with tenancy issues, poor standards and poor relationships. The Tenancy Relations Officer will liaise across a range of Council teams (e.g. Anti-social behaviour, Communities and Housing) and a range of external agencies (e.g. Police, charitable agencies, community groups etc.) to facilitate appropriate resolutions to tenant and landlord issues, including taking enforcement action where appropriate. The Council's Home Choice Team will also assist customers in private rented accommodation through provision of direct advice and signposting to other sources of support, advice and guidance on housing related and tenancy matters.

**Continuing the work to improve access to the PRS for homelessness prevention**

6.19 Given that there is generally a lack of supply of affordable housing in Oxford, and for some, Private Rented Sector accommodation may be an individual’s

\textsuperscript{14} CEB Report 15/9/16 - 
\url{http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s31744/Report%20%20Rent%20Guarantees%20Scheme.pdf}
only choice, it will be important for the City Council and private property owners to continue to maximise the use of private rented properties to meet housing needs.

6.20 Publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the support offered by the City Council to private landlords when letting their property could enable more PRS properties to become available and offer a wider accommodation choice to prospective tenants.

6.21 The work of the Council’s Private Sector Team also contributes to preventing homelessness and creating sustainable and safe communities. Their work involves:
- Working in partnership to prevent homelessness, illegal eviction, and harassment of tenants in the Private Rented Sector.
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Regulation of single occupied/family dwellings – improving property conditions and preventing anti-social behaviour.
- Enforcing against unlawful dwellings.
- Reducing fuel poverty.
- Providing Home Improvement Agency services, Disabled Facilities Grants, property adaptations and Flexible Home Improvement Loans.

6.22 Chapter 7 of this strategy explains these activities in more detail. It will be important for the Council to continue to deliver this work to improve access to quality dwelling stock in the private sector.

**Bringing empty properties back into use within the City**

6.23 To maximise the opportunity to make best use of existing properties in the city, Oxford City Council takes a proactive approach to working with empty property owners to help bring them back into use. In the event of owners failing to cooperate the Council will consider a range of enforcement and other legal powers available to it.

6.24 The City Council’s first Empty Property Strategy was introduced in 2009 when there were 717 empty dwellings recorded across the City. Since then there has been a substantial reduction in the number of empty dwellings to 303 in March 2017. This has been achieved principally through provision of advice, information and enforcement action taken by the Empty Property Officer with support from officers within environmental development, revenues/council tax, planning, corporate assets, property services and legal teams alongside external services including fire, police and social services.
6.25 As explained in earlier chapters of this strategy, Oxford is experiencing housing challenges and there is limited availability of suitable and affordable housing. This is a real issue for those who need to live in Oxford and who are unable to find suitable and affordable homes to live in. In addition, given that some empty properties are a safety concern or have an adverse impact on local amenities, empty properties are also a concern for existing Oxford residents and businesses. With this in mind, it is even more important now that the City Council continues its commitment to take a proactive approach to bringing empty properties back into use.

6.26 There are usually a complex range of reasons for dwellings to be unoccupied however, the Council can use a range of informal and formal actions to facilitate and enable properties found to be unoccupied in the City to be brought back into use. Where appropriate, the Council will also identify empty properties that include land, or access to land that comprehensively could be suitable for the development of additional housing units (subject to planning approval).

6.27 Although the main aim would be to work collaboratively with property owners, if they do not co-operate with the Council, then legal action will be taken in accordance with the aims of this strategy and the legislation/guidance relevant at the time. Any action taken would be subject to available resources.

6.28 With Oxford City’s housing challenge in mind, properties to be prioritised for action by the Council will include:

- dwellings unoccupied for 10+ years,
- dwellings unoccupied for 2 years or more where the property is in unknown or uncertain ownership (following the death of an owner),
- dwellings unoccupied for more than 6 months,
- dwellings classed as second homes for Council Tax purposes but which are known
to have been unoccupied for more than a year,
• properties considered to be in poor condition or causing a detrimental environmental impact,
• properties where the owner already faces enforcement action by other council departments in relation to the empty property,
• properties affecting the stability or causing harm to other properties,
• long-term empty properties where the owner owns more than one empty property,
• properties where the owner owes money to the Council.

The types of action are set out below:

Informal Action

6.29 This process is initiated by contacting owners of empty properties to establish why the property is unoccupied and what if any, assistance can be provided to ensure a property is brought back into use. Assistance may include:

• sign posting to relevant organisations who may provide support with specific issues,
• up-to-date information on property sale values and rental potential,
• providing contact details of interested purchasers held by the Council (at the request of an owner),
• enabling planning advice,
• where a property has been unoccupied for more than 2 years the Council can provide written confirmation to enable an application for a reduction in VAT on works to bring the property back into use,
• providing regular support by the Empty Property Officer taking a problem solving approach.

Formal Action

6.30 At best empty properties are a waste of valuable resources but often empty properties can have negative effects on neighbourhoods and their environment. The Council will if appropriate, take formal action if a property is found to be firstly causing a nuisance. This may be as a result of, unsightliness, public health issues or associated anti-social behaviour and in response to requests by emergency services. Secondly where an owner is either unable or unwilling to ensure their property is brought back into use.

Selling or renting out the empty property on the open market

6.31 In some cases the best solution is to rent or sell the property on the open market so that the property comes back into use through improvement and refurbishment by the owner. Clearly if this is the best option, the existing owner
will be encouraged, supported and guided to do this and the Council will offer advice and guidance on what other help may be available within the Council and from external bodies on how this can be done.

**Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs)**

6.32 The Housing Act 2004 introduced new powers to Local Authorities to take over the management of empty properties where owners have rejected all reasonable voluntary solutions to bring it back into use. EDMOs give local authorities the power to take over management of a long term empty property for up to seven years to ensure that it becomes and remains occupied. However this enforcement option does require the local authority to provide considerable resources in terms of staff, time and finance to be successful over a prolonged period.

**Enforced Sale**

6.33 A charge will be registered on the Local Land Charge Register or if appropriate on the national Land Registry where the following applies:

- where the owner of an empty home owes money to the Council and where all other options of recovering the debt have been explored, or
- where the Council has served formal notices relating to the property (e.g. under the Housing Act(s), Environmental Protection Act, Local Government (Misc Provisions) Act(s), Town & Country Planning Act(s), and/or other relevant enforcement options), and has carried out works in default of the aforementioned notice(s) and has expended money in doing so.

6.34 The charge enables the Council to take all necessary legal action to recover these costs through the courts, and enforcing the sale of the property (where appropriate) could ensure that the empty property is brought back into use by the existing or new owner.

6.35 To facilitate efficient and effective action across Council services to enforce the law pertaining to land and empty properties, relevant Officers are empowered to undertake such enforcement actions as is necessary and appropriate.

**Compulsory Purchase Orders**

6.36 The use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) may be considered by the Council as a final resort in the most exceptional circumstances to bring long-term empty properties back into use. With CPOs the property is purchased by the Council and where required, the owner is compensated for the loss of the property (rather than taking over the management of the property as in the case of EDMOs).

6.37 It will always be the Council's intention to use all other methods of informal action as explained above prior to progressing with a CPO. However, in appropriate cases the Council will consider the use of a CPO to resolve long term problematic empty homes where sufficient resources to take such action are available.
Legislative powers for empty property purposes

6.38 **Fig 6.2** identifies some of the legislation and associated powers that can be used by the City Council to bring empty properties back into use. The list is not exhaustive and new legislation and guidance will also be considered. The legislation and guidance documentation prescribes the processes and procedures to follow when implementing such powers. These include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Act 1984</th>
<th>Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Planning Act 2016</td>
<td>Land Compensation Act 1973, Compulsory Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Property Act 1925, Enforced Sale</td>
<td>Local Gov’t and Housing Act 1989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Empty Commercial dwellings

6.39 In response to the increase in numbers of people sleeping rough in the City, in April 2017, full Council requested officers to investigate the potential of empty commercial buildings to be used as temporary homeless shelters.

6.40 Whilst temporary homeless shelters are not always an appropriate or sustainable solution to street homelessness, this type of accommodation option could be realised through the use of empty commercial buildings. However, the main potential of empty commercial properties could be to facilitate opportunities for redevelopment, economic sustainability, and appropriate change of use to residential units or to support regeneration of an area within the City. Given this, the City Council has been proactive in identifying empty commercial sites and it is intended to continue this element of empty property work for the following purposes:

- a potential for change of use from commercial to residential, provided it meets planning criteria for such proposals
- to provide advice and assistance to owners of empty commercial sites to bring them back into use.
Empty dwellings and the New Homes Bonus

6.41 In 2011 the Government introduced the New Homes Bonus (NHB). The NHB is a grant paid by Central Government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas and includes empty dwellings being brought back into use. The NHB until 2016/17 was paid over a 6 year period (now reduced to 4 years) for each new home and empty dwelling brought back into use. The yearly bonus equates to the council tax value for each property. A further major change introduced at a late stage by Central Government to take effect from 2017/18 onwards, was that only growth above 0.4% will attract NHB payments. In practical terms this has reduced the City Council’s allocation for 2017/18 from an estimated £611,193 to only £333,267. The point of this is that although there is a reduction in the amount of NHB being made available in the coming years, bringing empty dwellings back into use still provides an opportunity for money to be reinvested into Oxford to benefit residents and visitors alike.
7. Invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy

Priority: Invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy
- Regenerate estates to continue to improve and make best use of Council-owned and private sector housing.
- Improve the general environment of our estates by delivering our investment programmes and contributing to programmes designed to improve health and wellbeing of residents.
- Take action to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit.

To continue to build a better environment to live in and support a sustainable community, Oxford City Council will:

- Deliver the planned major refurbishment and estate regeneration projects in line with the allocated budget (see Chapter 9) and to improve the satisfaction of residents living in Oxford communities.

- Continue work associated with the Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-19 that makes a significant contribution towards improving private rented sector properties, creating sustainable communities and reducing homelessness e.g. Licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation, regulation of single dwellings, support to bring empty properties back into use, take enforcement action on unlawful dwellings, and provide Disabled Facilities Grants and Flexible Home Improvement Loans.

- Consider increasing intervention and regulation of private rented sector properties to secure improved property conditions (using new powers in the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

- Continue to promote energy efficiency across all tenures to reduce fuel poverty and ensure that properties are improved and can meet the legislative Energy Performance Certificate level E or above by April 2018.

- Share lessons learned on the Barton Healthy New Towns project and use this, along with other best practice, to inform future sustainable developments.

- Continue to invest resources to mitigate risks from the impact of the Welfare Reform Act and introduction of Universal Credit, supporting people into financial inclusion and helping to address particular housing challenges for under 35 year olds requiring benefit assistance.
7.1 ‘Oxford 2050’ provides an overarching strategic long-term vision to bring together economy, society and environment in a holistic way. To do this, we need to create sustainable communities in Oxford and ensure that people can live settled lives in communities where they feel they can belong and can contribute to.

7.2 Suitable housing is an integral part of building sustainable communities. Highlighted at the beginning of this strategy, was the opportunity to build large scale developments within Oxford. However, any development needs to happen in a sustainable way. Whilst the Local Plan policies set out what is required in planning terms, consideration also needs to be given to:

- how new communities will integrate with existing ones
- how a mix of tenure provided in areas can assist in re-balancing social and economic impact on communities
- how the life of existing properties within communities can be extended through renewal programmes, maintenance and increased energy efficiency
- how the impact of new development on the environment can be reduced etc.

7.3 Some of these issues have already been considered within earlier chapters of this strategy. This chapter looks at how the current and planned work across the City, and changes in Government policy, will impact on creating sustainable communities.

**Great Estates Project**

7.4 The aim of the Great Estates project is to bring about environmental enhancement that benefits Oxford City Council-owned housing estates, by focusing on the most pressing issues of each block or estate. Although regular maintenance schemes are already in place along with planned works programmes to continue to meet the decent homes standard, the programme looks at a broader range of issues faced by each individual estate. Rather than treating each one the same and using a ‘blanket’ approach to resolving issues, each estate is considered individually and improvements are tailored to meet their distinct needs. The intention of the project is to improve the environment for resident local communities, giving them a greater sense of satisfaction, pride and inclusion in where they live.

7.5 The actions to improve estates are highlighted through several routes, from general inspections to concerns raised by tenants. Working with the residents of the estate and consulting with them on our plans and proposals, we can identify and understand the problems at hand. By making environmental enhancements, this helps to “future proof” the housing stock, improve the wellbeing of tenants, and by improving energy efficiency of homes, this can also make them more affordable to run.
7.6 There is a programme of work already identified for the Great Estates project and appropriate budgets have been set aside (see Chapter 9 on Funding). Schemes being addressed and delivered in 2017/18 include:
- improvements in storage and parking provision and landscaping at Stowford and Bayswater Road;
- improvements to the street scene and refuse facilities at Barton Road;
- a new communal garden for High Cross Way;
- comprehensive parking and landscaping at Townsend Square as well as painting and repairs to the blocks; and
- increased security and door entry to several blocks in the city.

7.7 We will ensure that the Great Estates programme continues to be implemented (subject to the available resources) so that environmental and social benefits of the improvements are realised. In turn, this could help to improve the value of stock and open up opportunities for the Council to build more homes through asset management and finance.

Regeneration

Blackbird Leys Regeneration, Oxford

7.8 The district centre of Blackbird Leys was developed in the 1950s and ‘60s to serve the residents of the new Council estate. Many of the buildings are now outdated and the retail block and community centre are nearing the end of their design life. The poor quality public realm, dominated by the highway, and fragmented land uses are considered to be unattractive and an inefficient use of land which could be better used to help address Oxford’s housing shortage.

7.9 Blackbird Leys is home to 13,100 residents and includes areas that fall within the highest levels of the national deprivation indices, in part due to low skills levels, low educational attainment levels, and reduced health and life expectancy. To address some of these issues, four years ago the Council initiated work with the Princes Foundation in collaboration with the community and stakeholders. This work has been taken forward to prepare a masterplan for the area in consultation with the community. The estate is now a priority regeneration area and a focus for a range of improvement programmes being undertaken by the by the City Council and its partners. There is a strong working relationship with the local community and this helps to support the delivery of work programmes.

7.10 The City Council is already making significant investment in the estate. Last year the Council’s affordable homes programme delivered new homes in Blackbird Leys and completed the development of a new swimming pool and leisure facilities. A major programme of refurbishment of the tower blocks is underway as well as work to support the wider area and community support schemes.

7.11 Blackbird Leys and Barton are both regeneration areas in the City (Barton is linked with the Barton Healthy New Towns Project mentioned later in this chapter). As regeneration continues to be important, we will work with partners...
and communities to maximise funding opportunities and make improvements across the City.

**Improving energy efficiency in housing stock and other properties across Oxford**

7.12 Part of regeneration work can include improvements within existing residential stock to ensure that stock conditions are good and dwellings remain fit for habitation. Improving energy efficiency in properties has wider benefits than just those to the property occupier and can help to create or maintain sustainable communities. Improved energy efficiency is also highlighted within the City Council’s Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-19 and is also embedded within the:

- Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Housing Assistance Policy.

**Energy Related work: Council Housing**

7.13 Over the past four years, the Council has carried out £6,727,300 of energy related improvement work and accessed £756,918 worth of capital funding through large scale work programmes including insulation and installation of renewables, primarily in the Council’s own housing stock. This includes 206 cavity wall insulations, 846 loft insulation installations, 80 external wall insulations and 86 solar Photovoltaic (PV)\(^{15}\) installations.

7.14 Due to government policy changes, there have been reduced budgets for this work but, the current work programme is detailed below:

- Undertake a sample Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) survey, then prioritise all properties rated Energy Performance Certificate E, F and G for potential improvement measures according to available Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding from April 2017.
- Offering an upgrade of traditionally electrically heated properties to gas central heating to all Council tenants where this is feasible.
- Rolling out a minimum standard of 270mm loft insulation to all appropriate properties.

**Supporting tenants with their energy bills**

7.15 Two Energy Advice Officers are advising tenants on energy efficiency, heating systems and basic energy tariff issues. By March 2017, 1813 tenants had been visited and visits attempted to another 1593, representing savings of around £116,370 to the tenants. Advice work is carried out in conjunction with the Citizens’ Advice Bureau which also offers detailed support and guidance on debt issues, energy debt and related issues, and financial planning. Working with our tenants in this way can help reduce the potential risk of homelessness as a result of debts. The Council is looking to extend this role beyond the initial two year period, subject to budget availability.

\(^{15}\) PV - A method of converting energy from the sun to generate electric power.
7.16 Energy related work: in private rented and for vulnerable homeowners.

- The Affordable Warmth Network offer a single point of contact for people worried about energy bills and current plans are to improve its outputs by increasing direct referrals into energy and health and social care related services.
- The Better Housing Better Health project, coordinated by the National Energy Foundation, took health referrals for respiratory and cardiovascular patients to improve their homes, and is an illustration of a joint project to tackle the links between cold, damp housing and health.
- The current Local Energy Advice Project (LEAP) builds on the referral links already developed by offering a holistic home visit that looks at small repairs, income maximisation and energy efficiency measures, to improve homes for the ill and vulnerable.
- The Council’s Home Improvement Agency (HIA) manages a number of energy efficiency related grants and installer routes for vulnerable residents in the City.
- By using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing system, the Council checks rented properties rated F or G on their energy performance certificates (EPC), and requires landlords to make improvements where necessary. This has improved around 100 properties so far.

7.17 Cost of works and funding accessed over the last two years for the projects mentioned are detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work and No. of Properties (where available)</th>
<th>Funding brought in</th>
<th>Total cost of works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65 properties visited and excess cold issue resolved (many EPCs are rated F and G)</td>
<td>£591,225.50 for 2016/17</td>
<td>£591,225.50 for 2016/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And £623,200 for 2015/16</td>
<td>And £623,200 for 2015/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 properties visited and damp and mould issue resolved (many EPCs are rated F and G)</td>
<td>£26,384 for 2016/17</td>
<td>£47,767.13 for 2016/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£26,900 for 2015/16 assuming BG boilers around £2500 per install</td>
<td>£36,908 for 2015/16 assuming BG boilers around £2500 per install</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various measures under HIA Winter Warmth Grant (boilers, insulation, glazing) including match funding from Better Housing Better Health (BHBH)</td>
<td>£13,619</td>
<td>£13,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional BHBH measures in 7 properties</td>
<td>£1500 in household hamper packs</td>
<td>£1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping Kids Cosy</td>
<td>£7071+</td>
<td>£7071+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP project</td>
<td>£35,000</td>
<td>£60,000 (not yet completed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for private rented energy efficiency measures (loft insulation, TRVs, Radiator foil, draught proofing etc.)</td>
<td>£30,000 (est.)</td>
<td>£30,000 (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,354,899</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,381,290</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenges for the future in relation to delivering energy efficiency and reducing carbon footprint

7.18 Policy changes announced by Central Government in 2015 – primarily the annual 1 % rent reduction and potential sale of high value voids levy - have
impacted on the Council’s Housing Revenue Asset business plan, and has meant a significant reduction in investment funds previously planned for energy efficiency in social housing. Recent reductions in financial incentives for energy renewables such as the ‘Feed-in Tariff’ have also meant that domestic solar PV is no longer feasible. However, ECO funding continues to be sought by the Council in order to invest in energy efficiency works on council housing projects as the Council has an ethical responsibility to ensure all properties are EPC rated ‘E’ or above.

7.19 Oxford also has a high number of ‘hard to treat’ homes, i.e. solid wall and system builds, and also a high proportion of heritage homes which have many planning restrictions. There is also a relatively high proportion of private rented properties (around 28%) compared with the South East and England. Private rented properties are generally poorer in terms of energy efficiency and this is why the poorer performing private rented sector is being targeted by the appropriate services. This is done via enforcement and the provision of funding such as the Ebico Private Rented Energy Efficiency Grant, which is administered by the Council (PREEG).

Priority actions for energy efficiency

7.20 New developments across the City including our new social housing should be built to a high energy efficiency standard to reduce the need for retrospective energy efficiency improvements. The Energy Act states that all private rented properties need to meet the EPC standard of E or above from 1 April 2018 and work to promote and enforce this will continue within this sector. This minimum standard will also be applied by Council housing as part of our ethical obligation.

Creating sustainable homes in the private sector

7.21 In creating sustainable communities, the City Council needs to consider: the impact of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO); good housing management; stock condition in the local area; suitability of landlords; regulatory requirements; safety and security of residents; protection of the environment/energy efficiency; and how homes can be adaptable to provide for changing household needs. The details of work around energy efficiency have already been discussed above, but there are other priorities for action as set out in the Private Sector Housing Policy (2016-19):

7.22 Priority 1: Additional Licensing

a. Work in partnership to prevent homelessness/illegal eviction/ harassment of tenants across all tenures in the Private Rented Sector (PRS.)
b. Review the Oxford City Landlords Accreditation Scheme and 150 landlords/agents accredited.
c. Gain a better understanding of the true extent of numbers of HMOs that exist within Oxford to allow for more focussed targeting for licensing purposes.
d. Improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in HMOs in Oxford and address fuel poverty.
e. Carry out enforcement against private rented properties with no Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

f. Licence HMOs and ensure focus is on identifying unlicensed HMOs.

7.23 **Priority 2: Regulation of single occupied/family dwellings**

a. Continue to proactively target rogue landlords operating in the PRS – Remove all Category 1 hazards from 275 properties per annum.

b. Improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in homes in Oxford and address fuel poverty for single households & families – work with stakeholders to continue roll out of targeting of properties with EPC ratings F & G.

c. Work with Empty Property Officer - reducing the number of empty homes in Oxford to reduce the burden on housing shortage and prevent anti-social behaviour.

d. Significantly improve management and property conditions and reduce anti-social behaviour in the PRS - Introduce a selective licensing scheme for PRS single occupied dwellings.

e. Ensure non-compliance with improvement notices can be successfully remedied – where needed secure appropriate funding and undertake ‘works in default’ of notices.

f. Measure cost savings to the NHS and society and seek additional funding – determine cost savings of dealing with any Housing Health & Safety Rating Scheme issues.

7.24 **Priority 3: Unlawful dwellings**

a. Ensure unlawful structures are dealt with using planning/building control and housing legislation – e.g. Town & Country Planning Act notices, Prohibition Orders, other enforcement action.

b. Continue working with external agencies HMRC and UK Border Agency when required.

7.25 **Priority 4: Housing Assistance**

a. Ensure 100% of the Disabled Facilities Grant is spent.

b. Provide excellent Home Improvement Agency (HIA) services.

c. Reduce fuel poverty for vulnerable residents. Securing funding for fuel poverty works.

d. Promote the Flexible Home Improvement Loan scheme.

e. Achieve the Foundations Standard and attain membership thereby extending service to the wider community (Foundations = National Body for HIA and handy person services.)

7.26 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), Adaptations and Flexible Home Improvement Loans (HIL) assist households (tenants and owners) to remain living independently and safely in their homes for as long as possible. This in turn, contributes to meeting a range of needs, reducing the opportunity for homelessness due to unsuitability of housing and also creating sustainable
communities. The costs associated with DFGs, Adaptations and Flexible HIL for 2015-2017 are set out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April 2015 to March 2016</th>
<th>April 2016 to March 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Households assisted</td>
<td>Total Households assisted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFG Referrals</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor works</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small repairs</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key safes</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total DFG Spend</strong></td>
<td><strong>685</strong></td>
<td><strong>780</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Flexible Home</strong></td>
<td><strong>£485,714</strong></td>
<td><strong>£401,637</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement Loans £</td>
<td><strong>£145,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>£160,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.27 The Private Sector Housing Policy is due for renewal in 2019. Given the significant contribution that the work with the PRS makes to sustainable communities and homelessness prevention, it is essential that we maintain or improve on the priorities for action listed above. Given the new regulatory powers introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, consideration should be given to increasing intervention and regulation of private rented sector properties to secure improved property conditions, reduce Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), and improve energy efficiency. This will ensure that dwellings are fit for rent and meet current standards.

**Contribution of mixed tenure in creating sustainable communities**

7.28 In Chapter 4 of this strategy, we have highlighted the need to provide housing for ownership, rent and intermediate forms of tenure, and how a range of tenures, suitably located, can contribute towards creating mixed and balanced communities that support local economic growth. Changes in security of rented tenure can impact upon the sustainability of communities and this is explained further below.

7.29 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced mandatory fixed term tenancies for Local Authorities (with Secure/Lifetime tenancies’ no longer to be awarded). This is contrary to the current tenancy arrangements offered by the City Council and what is also supported within the Council’s Tenancy Strategy & Policy Statement. Long-term tenancies can help to create sustainable and settled communities. However with the introduction of Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT) there is an increased risk that tenants will need to move at the end of their fixed term if the property they live in is no longer suitable to meet their ongoing needs.
The impact of Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT) on:

**Households**

7.30 The impact of changes in legislation to make FTTs mandatory could result in tenant households becoming more transient. Ending a tenancy may be unsettling particularly for vulnerable people who may require further support from agencies to make a planned move (if they are required to do so) at the end of their FTT. More house moves can unsettle the stability of a household over time.

7.31 If tenants are more likely to be transient, they may be more reluctant to invest in home improvements and upkeep of decoration etc. The Council is in the process of reviewing Council tenancy agreements and will need to ensure that the responsibility of tenants to look after their home is made clear within the new agreement.

7.32 At present, there are limited alternative affordable housing options in Oxford therefore, with a lack of available and affordable housing in the City, there may be increased need to consider moves out of area and away from existing family and support networks on which they may be reliant (to support caring duties, sustainability of employment or access to educational activities). Alternatively, a change of accommodation and perspective could also enable households to adjust their arrangements and take control of their aspirations in respect of where and how they would like to live.

**Communities**

7.33 As highlighted above, with an increased risk of moving, households may become more transient which in turn may impact upon the infrastructure of the community and its support network. With lack of stability, communities could become fractured, impacting upon existing networks such as those with the police, social and health care services and the general goodwill of neighbours. People may become less committed in investing their time within their local community if they are more likely to have to move.

**Health & Wellbeing**

7.34 The reliance of a local support network to ensure good health and wellbeing may be impeded by using FTT’s. Consistency of accessibility to hospitals, medical health centres, education establishments, social and care services will determine where people wish to live and determine where and what they can afford.

**Resource**

7.35 Managing FTTs will require additional resource to ensure more frequent tenancy reviews are undertaken and any moves (where necessary) are planned and managed carefully. The City Council’s Tenancy Management Team will work closely with the Housing Options and Allocations Teams to ensure that support and advice is provided for those tenants who will need to make a
planned move at the end of their FTT. Staff and budgetary resources will need to be further aligned to accommodate the extra administrative burdens and skills sets needed. It will be important to minimise rent loss and make the best use of existing social housing stock.

7.36 In line with legislative requirements and Government guidance, the City Council will introduce fixed term tenancies and ensure that the Allocations Scheme is aligned to address the issue of priority where a planned move is required.

Mitigating the impact of Welfare Reform changes to support sustainable communities

7.37 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced Universal Credit which encompasses housing benefit, child tax credit, income support, working tax credit, income based jobseekers allowance and income related employment and support allowance. The full roll out of Universal Credit in Oxford is due October 2017.

7.38 The introduction of Universal Credit; reform to Local Housing Allowance; removal of the spare room subsidy (known as the Bedroom Tax); and, since 6th April 2017 child tax credit is limited to two children per household (those households with more than two children prior to 6th April 2017 are not affected), will make it difficult for low income households to remain living in high value housing market areas such as Oxford. Some of the issues have already been discussed in chapter 6 of this strategy (in respect of access into the Private Rented Sector). In particular, single people under 35 who are renting in the private sector and receive Local Housing Allowance are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate (with some exemptions).

7.39 From April 2019 the level of Housing Benefit, or the housing element of Universal Credit, claimed by tenants in social housing (council and housing association) will be restricted to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. Although there is not a large amount of single under 35’s renting social housing in Oxford, some will be affected and will only be entitled to the shared accommodation rate. This is an area of concern as the social rented sector does not, as a general rule, let shared properties. Single people under 35 living in self-contained one-bedroom properties may experience a shortfall between their contractual rent and the LHA rate for a room in shared housing.

7.40 Without support, those who are affected most by these changes may be at risk of homelessness, and the sustainability of communities could be adversely affected especially where there are currently identified issues of deprivation.

7.41 To mitigate some impacts of the Welfare Reform changes and introduction of Universal Credit (UC), the Welfare Reform Team with proactive intervention, has continued to communicate, engage and work with residents, support

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16 The LHA caps will apply from April 2019 for all tenants on Universal Credit, and to tenants claiming Housing Benefit whose tenancies began, or have been renewed, since April 2016.
households to remain in their homes and reduce the risk of homelessness. The Team helps people who are experiencing changes to their benefits to maximise their income, manage debt, improve their work prospects, access training and get other support they may need to improve their situation for the long term. The team offers:

- a dedicated, flexible and one-to-one personal support to get people into work and break down the barriers to accessing work opportunities;
- joint partnership working with the local Job Centre;
- provide digital support access for UC customers;
- help to eligible people to pay shortfalls between Housing Benefit and contractual rent through provision of discretionary housing payments (DHPs);
- provide budgeting support for UC customers;
- help to people to find housing that fits the household’s needs through downsizing or mutual exchange; and
- general advice, information and support, and referrals to other advice agencies in the city to help who are also able to help with reducing the impact of Welfare Reform changes and introduction of UC.

7.42 The Welfare Reform Team works in partnership with a range other teams across the council such as, tenancy management, tenancy sustainment, housing services as well as other support agencies across the city to collectively tackle and reduce homelessness in Oxford.

7.43 Another impact of Welfare Reform is the 1% Local Authority rent reduction introduced by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. Whilst a freeze in rent may help some Council Tenants in terms affordability, the 1% annual rent reduction has impacted on the Council’s planned investment to improve its stock and, in particular, to build more affordable homes in the future. To mitigate this, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the Council has set up a Housing Company to facilitate new development programmes going forward. More information on the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 is set out in Appendix C.

7.44 It will be important for the City Council to continue to proactively plan for, and take action, to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit so that Oxford communities can continue to be economically active and supported.

The work of the Accommodation & Tenancy Sustainment and the Tenancy Management Teams

7.45 The role of the Tenancy Sustainment and Tenancy Management Teams is to help vulnerable council tenants access the support and services they need in order to sustain and maintain their tenancy, and improve their quality of life. The team can receive referrals from anyone, including members of the tenant’s family, neighbours, friends, partner agencies and other City Council departments. In practice most referrals come from other Council Officers who
have had contact with a tenant which has raised a concern about the person’s health or wellbeing.

7.46 The Team offer a service covering:

- **New tenant visits** – Introduction to promote a good landlord tenant relationship and to advise of links with local services and the community.
- **Probationary tenancy management** – To ensure tenants are managing their tenancy and property successfully.
- **Tenancy checks** – Visits to identify any concerns at an early stage to ensure tenancy sustainability.
- **Tenant mobility & access services** – Ability to guide and advise on support and specialist services available to help address complex needs. Assessments of property suitability can be made with referrals to appropriate services to ensure the tenants’ needs are met.
- **Tenancy changes & financial support** – Offer a responsive service by arranging appropriate support and give advice to tenants in need (e.g. maximise benefits for tenant in crisis, significant health changes, loss of job etc.).
- **Tenancy management interventions** – Working to actively identify and respond to a range of tenancy breaches [other than Anti-Social Behaviour]
- **Tenancy enforcement and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)** – The Team work with the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team (ASBIT) to try and resolve ASB issues at the earliest opportunity to preserve the tenancy.
- **Gardening Service** – supporting vulnerable clients to meet their responsibilities under their tenancy agreement.
- **Fire safety, hoarding and property maintenance.**

**Support whilst in Temporary Accommodation (TA)**

7.47 When a customer moves into TA, they are assigned a dedicated Accommodation Sustainment Officer (ASO) whose role is to support TA residents. This is done by:

- Providing advice and information about how to sustain their agreement.
- Ensuring the customer is able to access other support services.
- Providing support/ clarification in terms of customer’s housing options.
- Assisting them to place bids on properties through the City Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme and giving general information about properties and the area/facilities available.
- Regular welfare checks.

7.48 Assistance provided by the Accommodation & Sustainment Team as part of a resettlement plan can include:

- Accompanying a customer to viewings and ‘sign up’s’
- Providing/arranging help with packing and arranging delivery of personal belongings through the use of the City Council’s Multi-skilled Operative
• Discuss support with the client and complete a resettlement support needs assessment and support plan (if applicable)
• Identify what other services need to support the customer e.g. Mental Health services etc.
• Sourcing furniture either through charitable organisations or through the City Council’s Furnished Tenancy Scheme: Notifying agencies of change of address
• Providing practical and personal support to help tenants settle into the community and deal with neighbours
• Highlighting to the customer their rights and responsibilities as a resident
• Advising customers moving from TA into a new tenancy about how to find and use local resources such as shops, banks, schools or bus routes, and will put them in touch with other people and supporting services.
• Checking that support networks are in place and making sure tenants know what services are available and what the services do.
• Helping customers to identify opportunities for education, training and employment.

7.49 As a responsible Landlord, the City Council strives to work with customers in a comprehensive and responsive way in order to help them settle into their communities and sustain their accommodation over the long term. The work of Accommodation and Sustainment Team and Tenancy Management Teams (in partnership with a range of Council services, public bodies, voluntary and community sector organisations), contribute significantly to this aim. Working in this way also helps to prevent homelessness and contributes towards improving the health and wellbeing of Council tenants.

Improving health and wellbeing and working with the City Council’s Communities Team.

7.50 In earlier chapters of this strategy, we have recognised that there are strong links between accessibility to suitable and affordable housing, and economic growth, health and wellbeing, provision of support, and development of sustainable communities. An example of how this is happening in Oxford is the Barton Healthy New Towns project.

Barton Healthy New Towns project

7.51 Barton Healthy New Town is one of ten healthy new towns sites which are part of NHS England’s Healthy New Town project17, with the aim of creating innovative and sustainable ways for new developments to achieve improved health and wellbeing in communities - Putting health and wellbeing at the heart of the community.

7.52 The Barton Healthy New Town project team combines practitioners from Oxford City Council, Grosvenor (Barton Park developers), Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxfordshire County Council Public Health; with input from the local community and activities being delivered by local groups.

7.53 The project aims and priorities were developed using the Barton Health Plan and feedback from the community, which identified significant health inequalities around life expectancy, food poverty, mental health issues and social isolation. The overall aim of the project is: All Barton residents (Barton and Barton Park) have an equal opportunity to good physical and mental health and good health outcomes.

7.54 In the first phase of the project we focused on creating a sustainable range of activities through a grants program that would help address these inequalities as well as contribute to the learning. The aim was to create opportunities to support improved health care delivery for the current Barton community, such as through the redevelopment of the Bury Knowle GP surgery and the range of services it delivers.

7.55 Additionally, the project aims to model new ways of delivering health and wellbeing provision for all of Barton and to design a master plan that will build on our understanding of how the built environment affects health and wellbeing and promotes healthier lifestyles. Community engagement is central to the project, both in shaping the types of activities and services that are delivered. Lessons learned from this project, along with research on other best practice examples, will inform future developments and projects.
8. Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services

Priority: Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services

- Retain, let and manage good quality Council-owned homes at affordable rents that residents can sustain effectively, and ensure that tenancy arrangements are aligned with new legislation.
- Continue to improve the condition of Council stock through capital investment programmes focussed on regeneration and refurbishment projects.
- Continue to support a resident-led approach to developing high quality and inclusive services.

To be an effective landlord and deliver quality services we will:

- Continue and expand the work of the Tenant Involvement Team to achieve TPAS re-accreditation; deliver the Tenant Specialists project and associated governance structure; and make the opportunities for our tenants to become involved more inclusive and flexible.

- Ensure that where needed, support is provided by Tenancy & Accommodation Sustainment Team to ensure individuals placed in temporary accommodation or Council housing are supported to live independently, are not isolated and are able to sustain their accommodation (especially those placed in properties outside of the city).

- Continue to offer and promote the ‘Removal Expenses and Mobility Scheme (REMS)’ for Council Tenants who are under-occupying their current home and who wish to move (subject to available resources).

- Produce a new Tenancy Strategy and introduce fixed term tenancies for Council lets in line with legislative requirements and Government guidance.

- Ensure there are sufficient resources in place to accommodate the extra administrative burdens and skills sets needed to implement Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT) for Council-owned homes and over the longer term, monitor the impact on sustainability of communities following implementation of FTT.

- Continue to deliver quality Council stock through the housing and capital investment programmes (see also ‘Creating Sustainable Communities’ summary Chapter 7).

- Maintain the City Council’s ‘Gold Standard’ of homelessness prevention (as mentioned in Chapter 5)

- Procure an upgraded computer system for housing services and ensure that it is aligned with Government reporting requirements and provides a facility for our customers to apply for housing online (new service). We will also ensure that information on our website is updated regularly to assist with early intervention and homelessness prevention.
8.1 The City Council puts Council tenants at the heart of developing and delivering its landlord function and provides a range of services that contribute towards improving the lives of tenants and the wider community of Oxford. This chapter explains how Oxford City Council will continue to work as an effective landlord and deliver high quality services.

Working with Oxford City Council Tenants – delivering a tenant-led service

8.2 Oxford City Council is fully invested in putting tenants and leaseholders at the heart of everything it does. The local authority has a designated Tenant Involvement Team, who work to empower it’s 8,000 tenants and leaseholder base to be involved in designing and scrutinising the delivery of our landlord services.

8.3 Oxford City Council Tenants are involved in the following:

- Tenant Scrutiny Panel, with the chair co-opted onto the Housing (Councillor Scrutiny) Panel.
- Editorial Panel who work on housing related publications including the successful quarterly ‘Tenants in Touch’ magazine.
- Taking part in a free annual training programme provided by the Tenant Involvement Team, and run in local communities.
- Taking part in a corporately recognised Mystery Shopping programme.
- Involvement in the annual ‘Tenants on Tour’ programme to better understand the work of the Council’s repairs, waste/recycling and housing development services.
- System testing for the Tenant Portal main telephony system, and will be involved in the new housing CRM system.
- Tendering of major contracts, such as the tower block refurbishment program and Furnished Tenancy Scheme.
- Supporting the team in both event and conference planning and delivery.
- Work with the City Council internal service areas to negotiate Local Offers.
- Consultation exercises in relation to estate improvements, housekeeping, refurbishment programmes and proposed amendments to the Council’s Tenancy Agreement.
- Recruitment of Housing Staff through participation in interview stakeholder panels.

8.4 All of the above actions contribute towards ensuring that the City Council is a tenant-led, effective and efficient landlord that delivers good quality housing and landlord services to its customers. This view has been supported through external accreditation by the tenant engagement experts TPAS, who accredited Oxford City Council’s Tenant Involvement Team in December 2015 as being just one of only four Local Authorities to receive the accreditation at the time. The team has subsequently been awarded ‘Team of the Year’ at the TPAS Southern Region Awards in February 2017.
Future Plans to work with our tenants

8.5 To continue the tenant-led approach to delivering the Council’s Landlord Service, we plan to recruit, provide training and further develop ‘Tenant Specialists’ who, with the help of the Tenant Involvement Team, will take a lead on identifying opportunities and improvements on specific service areas. Tenant Specialists will also be able to inform the Tenant Scrutiny Panel on topics and activities relating their specialist area e.g. waste and recycling, anti-social behaviour issues, housing development etc. The involvement of such specialists will need to be secured through a formalised structure or governance arrangement and communicated to all who are involved in the programme.

8.6 Other future plans include:

- Creating opportunities for the new Tenant Specialists to negotiate Service Level Agreements / Local Offers / new measures to be taken to implement improvements in their specialist service area.
- For the Tenant Specialists to be involved in monitoring activities.
- Achieving TPAS reaccreditation for a further three years 2018-2021.
- Expand the Tenant Tour programme.
- Build on the principles of ‘tenant involvement’ to ensure that opportunities to develop our tenant-led approach become more inclusive and flexible. This could include:
  - Virtual involvement through social media, online services, text and email.
  - Introduction of an online training option.
  - Filming, editing and online posting of our Tenants Tours.

Supporting our vulnerable tenants to sustain their tenancies

8.7 As mentioned in earlier chapters to this strategy, the role of the Accommodation and Tenancy Sustainment Team (and also the Tenancy Management Team) is to help vulnerable council tenants to access the support and services that they need in order to maintain their tenancy and improve their quality of life. The Team ensures that individuals placed in temporary accommodation or in Council housing are supported to live independently, are not isolated and are able to sustain their accommodation. Regular visits to tenants can help them to understand their responsibilities, be a good neighbour and look after their homes. Where needed, the Accommodation and Tenancy Sustainment Team will link with public bodies and local organisations to ensure any specialist external support is put in place. Tenants are provided with information about the local area, links to and information about the local community and health services. It will be important for the City Council to ensure that these services continue to be delivered to a high standard as this reduces the likelihood of vulnerable tenants failing to sustain their tenancy and presenting themselves as homeless. By working in a comprehensive and supportive way, the City Council is also helping to improve the health and wellbeing of tenants and reducing health inequality.
Making better use of existing Council-owned Homes

8.8 Looking at the data we hold on Council tenants, overall, it is estimated that 29% of council owned dwellings are under-occupied (using the same criteria as the ‘bedroom tax’ rules for who can share a bedroom), which corresponds to 38% of family-sized properties (two-beds or larger). Of all those under-occupying their council homes, the majority (68%) require a one-bedroom property. 61% of under-occupying households have a main tenant aged 60 or over. Given this, to make best use of stock, it is important that the City Council continues to work with under-occupying households and promote the ‘Removal Expenses and Mobility Scheme (REMS)’. The scheme is for council tenants who are under-occupying their properties and who want to move to a smaller property that is easier to manage and afford. Tenants accepted on the scheme are given a higher housing priority to facilitate a quicker move and are placed in band 1 on the housing register if they are giving up two or more bedrooms or in band 2 if they are giving up one bedroom. They may also be eligible for compensation plus certain other expenses. The chart below shows the number of properties released through the REMS scheme in the last 5 years.

8.9 In addition, the City Council reviews its allocation policy to ensure appropriate allocation and best use of Council stock. Adverts for available properties on the Choice Based Letting System include details of any adaptations, special accessible features and who would be eligible to bid for the property in terms of the number of bedrooms etc.

Producing a new Tenancy Strategy 2018-21

8.10 The City Council’s Tenancy Strategy and Policy Statement are due for renewal in 2018 and currently support the delivery of social rented accommodation with lifetime tenancies. Social rented tenure is the most affordable tenure for the majority of households on the Council’s housing register.

8.11 Until now, social rented accommodation has been let by the Council with a secure tenancy, however this position will need to be revised in light of Housing and Planning Act 2016 and emerging guidance which sets out a mandatory requirement for Local Authorities to offer fixed term/flexible tenancies for new tenants (i.e. with Secure/Lifetime tenancies’ no longer to be awarded). To ensure that we are meeting our Landlord and legislative duties, we will follow Government guidance and publish a new Tenancy Strategy & Policy Statement 2018-21 to support the introduction of fixed term tenancies. In addition, we will
amend the Council’s Tenancy Agreement for Council-owned to reflect fixed term tenancies.

8.12 As we introduce Fixed Term Tenancies for council-owned stock, it is possible that the workload of the Council’s Tenancy Management Team is likely to increase, especially where there are more tenancy reviews to be undertaken. We will also need to monitor the impact that Fixed Term Tenancies have on creating and maintaining sustainable communities as this will help to inform the design and delivery of services in the future.

Delivering Quality Council Housing

8.13 As a Landlord, the City Council has responsibilities for maintaining its Council stock. The Council is committed to a comprehensive refurbishment and regeneration programme through the housing and capital investment programmes (see also Chapter 7 ‘Creating Sustainable Communities’ and the Funding Chapter 9 for more information on these investments.

8.14 Our affordable housing development programme and planning policies ensure that new affordable housing will be developed to accessible standards and will provide good quality housing that is energy efficient. Affordability testing will need to be carried out when setting out Local Plan 2036 affordable housing policies to ensure rented or intermediate tenures are affordable having regard to local incomes and house prices.

Maintaining Our Quality Housing and Homelessness Service Standards

8.15 As mentioned in Chapter 5, the City Council has been awarded the National Practitioner Service ‘Gold Standard’ for homelessness prevention services. The City Council’s Housing Needs Team continues to develop their service provision to meet a wide range of customer needs. Given the changing housing policy landscape, it may be more challenging but nevertheless important for the City Council to maintain these high quality standards and to complete any new Gold Standard ‘Local Challenges’ that are published within the life of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy in response to new legislative requirements i.e. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Welfare Reform.

More effective and efficient housing ICT systems

8.16 Given that more and more customers are converting to the regular use of digital technology and use of online services, it is important that Oxford City Council continues its endeavours to become a more efficient and effective Council. In line with our ICT work programme and the assigned budget and resources, we will procure an upgraded computer system for housing services and will ensure that it is aligned with the requirements of P1e reporting, data gathering for the Trailblazer project and also the requirements for recording homelessness.
prevention, relief and duty activities. It is intended that any new housing system for the Council will not only provide a more effective and efficient way of working for staff (including improved mobile working solutions) but also an online facility for customers to make a housing application. The City Council’s website information on housing and homelessness will also need to be updated to take into account the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 new roles and responsibilities.
9. Funding

9.1 There has been a clear commitment throughout this strategy to continue to provide high quality and innovative housing services to meet identified needs. In order to do this, the City Council has set out within its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) the available funds to deliver such services. The Council has also attracted external funding or has entered into joint agreements to fund specific projects such as developing more affordable housing units, provision of housing support services and commissioning a range of activities to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping. The MTFP is under review and will be updated from time to time through the life of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21.

9.2 This chapter explains the funding that has been made available to date and/or has been secured for ongoing and new projects. The City Council will continue to work proactively to maximise opportunities to secure new revenue and capital investment (including the potential funding opportunities), so that we are able to continue and/or enhance housing development and homelessness prevention services in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Amount</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£181.6 million</td>
<td>2017/18-2020/21</td>
<td>Capital Programme for Housing (General Fund(GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA))</td>
<td>The HRA Capital Programme is intrinsically linked to the HRA Business Plan since the resources to fund the Programme are largely generated through housing rents. The total of £181,633,000 includes HRA, Loans and Investments. Some of the key details are set out below:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HRA** (Total of £74m some of which includes the following):
- £7m being the balance of Tower Block refurbishment works.
- £4.2m Great Estates enhancement of tenant car parking and other infrastructure
- £3.3m Barton Regeneration
- £3.255m Improvements to doors, windows, controlled entry including the introduction of the Oxford Standard
- £21m Replacements of kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, heating and electrics
- £5.4m Blackbird Leys regeneration at the heart of the estate
- £5.3m adaptations, energy efficiency and empty homes.

**Loans**
- £61m Loans to Housing Company to purchase/develop approximately 541 new dwellings over the next 5 years. In addition to capital receipts, loan repayments will be made by the company back to the Council.

**Investments**
- £4.2m Loan to joint venture with Nuffield College to purchase development land at Oxpens. It is a 50/50 development partnership.
• £10m to acquire 39 temporary accommodation units.
• £21.2m Barton Park properties
• £200,000 Equity Loan Scheme for Teachers (2017/18 – 2018/19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Amount</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£1.9million (with a potential receipt of £6.2m on approved schemes (Jul 17))</td>
<td>Contributions secured to date 2016/17</td>
<td>Section 106 Financial Contributions Received</td>
<td>Money received goes toward provision of affordable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1,285,214</td>
<td>2017/18 (budget set each year)</td>
<td>Homeless Prevention Fund</td>
<td>Homeless Prevention activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£4m</td>
<td>2017- 2021</td>
<td>Agreed budget on Medium Term Financial Strategy</td>
<td>Disabled Facilities Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£380,000 per year</td>
<td>2017-21</td>
<td>Private Rented Sector</td>
<td>Deposit Guarantee Scheme etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£790,000</td>
<td>2017/19</td>
<td>DCLG Homeless Prevention Trailblazer</td>
<td>Trailblazer – Homeless prevention project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£745,000</td>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>Estate Regeneration Fund (HCA funding programme)</td>
<td>Blackbird Leys - £410,000 Barton - £335,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£350,000</td>
<td>2016 - 2021</td>
<td>Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (HCA funding programme)</td>
<td>To build 8 older person bungalows on Salford Road and Bracegirdle Road let at social rents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£6,782,000 (rounded)</td>
<td>2017 - 21</td>
<td>New Homes Bonus</td>
<td>The Council uses New Homes Bonus to contribute towards its general fund revenue costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£54,859</td>
<td>2016/17 (for 2-year project)</td>
<td>Community-Led Housing Funding from DCLG</td>
<td>To support community-led housing projects in areas where the impact of second homes is particularly acute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£541,000</td>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>DCLG - Flexible Homelessness Support Grant *</td>
<td>To enable local authorities to have more flexibility and control to tackle homelessness assisting those at crisis point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£623,000</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1,000,000</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>ICT Improvements to Housing Systems</td>
<td>To ensure that the Council’s ICT Housing System is updated to accommodate for changes in digital technology and to improve customer access.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Potential Funding Opportunities**

9.3 In addition to funding already secured above, Oxford City Council will continue to actively look for opportunities to increase it’s funding by receiving a share of amounts from grants highlighted below, and to also bid for new funding as and when it is released to ensure continued investment in securing development opportunities and sustaining existing communities within the City.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund type</th>
<th>Shared amount available</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Burdens Funding *</td>
<td>£61 million</td>
<td>DCLG</td>
<td>To assist funding the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Prevention Fund*</td>
<td>£40 million</td>
<td>DCLG</td>
<td>Homeless prevention funding (Other Trailblazer Projects around Rough Sleeping and Social Impact Bonds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• £20 million for local authorities to pilot new initiatives to tackle homelessness in their area</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• £10 million for targeted support for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough or those new to the streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• £10 million in Social Impact Bonds to help long-term rough sleepers with the most complex needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerated Construction</td>
<td>£1.7 billion</td>
<td>HCA Grant funded programme</td>
<td>Focus on smaller builders and modern methods of construction. Will be looking at Council owned surplus sites that can deliver 50 homes or more (or an equivalent package of sites) that will not be HRA owned at the end of the development process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Infrastructure Fund</td>
<td>£2.3 billion</td>
<td>HCA Grant funded programme</td>
<td>To provide infrastructure to deliver homes in areas of high demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Infrastructure Funding</td>
<td>£4.5 million</td>
<td>Homeless Link/Access</td>
<td>3-year funding for Charities and Social Enterprises (from June 2017). Offered as an unsecured loan of between £25,000 and £150,000. To increase the homelessness sector's knowledge and experience of social investment, develop new models for income generation and funding, improve their long-term sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£54 million</td>
<td>Aug 2017 – complete by 2020</td>
<td>Cabinet Office/ DCLG</td>
<td>Councils can now bid for funding for land remediation and small-scale infrastructure, which will help bring sites forward for housing that would not have otherwise been developed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Conclusion and priorities for action

10.1 To achieve the City Council’s housing ambition, our strategic priorities and a summary of the actions to deliver each of them are set out below:

**PRIORITY: Increase housing supply and improve access to affordable housing**

- Tackle the City’s housing challenge by promoting high quality development in the City, and in locations near to Oxford that are well-connected to the City, working in partnership with others, to build the homes that Oxford needs.
- Build more affordable homes, in partnership with others to meet the needs of different income and employment groups in the City, including those on low incomes and those who are vulnerable and need support.

10.2 To increase housing supply and deliver new homes, we will take the following actions:

- Deliver more affordable homes either by direct development or through the Council-owned Housing Company.

- Continue to facilitate the development of more housing and affordable housing through the Local Plan and partnership working (e.g. with Universities, Public bodies, land owners etc.).

- Work in partnership with other Oxfordshire Authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other key stakeholders to plan for and secure investment in infrastructure and housing needed to meet Oxfordshire’s current and future needs.

- Work with other Oxfordshire Local Authorities to agree the arrangements relating to the apportionment of housing to be developed in their area to provide for Oxford’s unmet housing need under the ‘Duty to Cooperate’ (including: the details relating to the mix of dwelling types and tenure, letting, management and affordable housing nomination arrangements).

- Ensure that Local Plan policies are developed to include opportunities to build the right mix of property types (and tenure) that will meet housing needs and maximise the opportunity to support social and economic development.

- Undertake further affordability testing as part of the policy development for the Local Plan 2036 to ensure that any affordable housing is affordable having regard to local incomes and house prices.

- Explore all opportunities for the Council and Registered Provider Partners to develop affordable housing with HCA funding.
• Work with Registered Provider’s and other public bodies to identify all opportunities for making best use of existing assets with a view to any potential redevelopment of sites, re-modelling of units where needed and opportunities for future new development.

• Use Community Housing Funding to commission research that will identify the need for, and viability of, providing community-led housing in the City.

• Evaluate the impact of the Teachers Equity Loan Scheme project in 2018/19.

• Continue work with the Universities to ensure that there is a balance between meeting the need for student accommodation without placing pressure on the private rented sector and/or reducing the opportunity to develop general needs affordable housing on sites within the City.

• Continue to work with major Oxford-based employers and public organisations to identify opportunities to deliver key staff accommodation to sustain local economic growth and continued delivery of key services.

• Continue the work already underway with the County Council to progress the recommendations within the Review of Older Persons Accommodation in Oxford (2016) (see Chapter 3).

• In line with legislation, undertake an assessment of needs of boat dwellers to inform the Local Plan submission document (see Chapter 3).

**PRIORITY: Prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people**

- Deliver early intervention actions along with quality, holistic housing advice and effective partnership working to prevent homelessness.
- Reduce rough sleeping and single homelessness through collaborative partnership working and delivery of effective supported housing pathways to help people to sustain their existing accommodation, and to provide accommodation and support for those in housing crisis.
- Continue to reduce the number of homeless households that require emergency or temporary accommodation.

10.3 We recognise that to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, we need to work in partnership with a range of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations to secure support for people to manage finances and sustain their existing accommodation, or access an alternative; and to provide accommodation and support for those in housing crisis; working to empower people to secure settled accommodation that can be sustained.

10.4 To prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people we will:
• Increase the focus on early intervention and preventing homelessness in line with new homelessness duties, supporting and advising people to sustain their accommodation and access services they need.

• Increase Young People’s awareness of housing issues by establishing Homeless Prevention work into curriculum for 15/16 year olds attending Oxford Schools.

• Develop stronger and broader working relations and new partnership approaches with stakeholders to facilitate a collaboratively co-designed City-wide framework and response to preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

• Successfully implement the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer project, investing in early intervention and solutions to prevent households from becoming homeless, including joint work with partners to improve discharges from hospitals or prison.

• Ensure our homelessness services remain among the best in the country, recognised by maintaining the national ‘Gold Standard’.

• Minimise the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by increasing access to longer term housing solutions.

• Ensure sufficient provision of suitable Temporary Accommodation, at best value to the Council, to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

10.5 To reduce rough sleeping and single homelessness we will:

• Increase our focus on early intervention and preventing single homelessness and rough sleeping.

• Ensure provision of an assertive outreach service to provide improved prevention, diversion and reconnection work (No First Night Out), with a rapid assessment focus (No Second Night Out) and personalised services (No Living on the Streets).

• Explore feasible options to accommodate and/or support homeless rough sleepers in the City who have no local connection to the City or anywhere else, and no recourse to public funds.

• Ensure a sufficient and appropriate mix of supported accommodation, with appropriate levels of support to match needs.

• Ensure the provision of an effective pathway of accommodation and specialist housing (including use of the ‘Housing First’ model) to help people move on from hostels to permanent settled housing.
• Reduce evictions from supported housing, especially through more work with partners, including mental health services (No Return to the Streets).

• Work in partnership to support clients to progress through the adult homeless pathway and to maintain settled accommodation with wrap around services, including training and employment initiatives, and effective floating support provision.

• Ensure adequate crisis accommodation, including reviewing winter and severe weather provision.

• Work with the Police, Community Safety and others to tackle unacceptable anti-social behaviour, health and safety risks and criminal activity on Oxford’s streets to improve life for all of Oxford’s residents, safeguard those involved at risk of criminal exploitation and encourage clients to engage with services.

• Actively work to promote and support an ‘Alternative Giving Campaign’ linked to anti-begging initiatives, to raise additional resources for homeless services.

**PRIORITY: Make best use of private sector accommodation**

- Bring empty properties back into use within the City – both residential dwellings and commercial buildings.
- Improve access to homes available to rent in the private sector for people receiving low incomes.
- Improve the condition of homes in the private sector by working with private sector landlords and actively enforcing standards for private rented housing; improving energy efficiency; and managing the impact on neighbourhoods of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

10.6 To make best use of private sector accommodation we will:

• Prevent homelessness by continuing to advise home owners who are in financial difficulty and who are at risk of mortgage repossession, of the help available to them.

• Review the impact and the social investment (via the National Homelessness Property Fund) of the Real Lettings Scheme and also the Rent Guarantee Scheme to ensure effective outcomes and value for money. Lessons learned from evaluation processes can help to inform future investment or change.

• Run publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the support offered by the City Council to private landlords when letting their property and promote the private rented sector (PRS) as a housing option.
• Monitor and report on the impact of Government policy changes on affordability and access to suitable and affordable accommodation in the PRS so that MPs, Councillors and Government are aware of the issues.

• Improve the condition of homes in the private sector by working with private sector landlords and actively enforcing standards for private rented housing; improving energy efficiency; and managing the impact on neighbourhoods of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

10.7 To bring empty properties into use we will:

• To reduce the number of empty dwellings in the city and therefore increase the availability of much needed accommodation, the Council will take appropriate informal and formal action to bring empty dwellings back into use.

• Investigate the number of empty commercial buildings in the City and where appropriate, their potential for development opportunities. Subject to sites being suitable for change of use or redevelopment (in line with any planning requirements), the Council will develop processes and procedures (within the life of this strategy) to take appropriate informal or formal action to bring them back into use.

PRIORITY: Invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy

- Regenerate estates to continue to improve and make best use of Council-owned and private sector housing.
- Improve the general environment of our estates by delivering our investment programmes and contributing to programmes designed to improve health and wellbeing of residents.
- Take action to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit.

10.8 To continue to build a better environment to live in and support a sustainable community, Oxford City Council will:

• Deliver the planned major refurbishment and estate regeneration projects in line with the allocated budget (see Chapter 9) and to improve the satisfaction of residents living in Oxford communities.

• Continue work associated with the Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-19 that makes a significant contribution towards improving private rented sector properties, creating sustainable communities and reducing homelessness e.g. Licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation, regulation of single dwellings, support to bring empty properties back into use, take enforcement action on unlawful dwellings, and provide Disabled Facilities Grants and Flexible Home Improvement Loans.
• Consider increasing intervention and regulation of private rented sector properties to secure improved property conditions (using new powers in the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

• Continue to promote energy efficiency across all tenures to reduce fuel poverty and ensure that properties are improved and can meet the legislative Energy Performance Certificate level E or above by April 2018.

• Share lessons learned on the Barton Healthy New Towns project and use this, along with other best practice to inform future sustainable developments.

• Continue to invest resources to mitigate risks from the impact of the Welfare Reform Act and introduction of Universal Credit, supporting people into financial inclusion and helping to address particular housing challenges for under 35 year olds requiring benefit assistance.

PRIORITY: Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services

- Retain, let and manage good quality Council-owned homes at affordable rents that residents can sustain effectively, and ensure that tenancy arrangements are aligned with new legislation.
- Continue to improve the condition of Council stock through capital investment programmes focussed on regeneration and refurbishment projects.
- Continue to support a resident-led approach to developing high quality and inclusive services.

10.9 To be an effective landlord and deliver quality services we will:

• Continue and expand the work of the Tenant Involvement Team to achieve TPAS re-accreditation; deliver the Tenant Specialists project and associated governance structure; and make the opportunities for our tenants to become involved more inclusive and flexible.

• Ensure that where needed, support is provided by Tenancy & Accommodation Sustainment Team to ensure individuals placed in temporary accommodation or Council housing are supported to live independently, are not isolated and are able to sustain their accommodation (especially those placed in properties outside of the city).

• Continue to offer and promote the ‘Removal Expenses and Mobility Scheme (REMS)’ for Council Tenants who are under-occupying their current home and who wish to move (subject to available resources).

• Produce a new Tenancy Strategy and introduce fixed term tenancies for Council lets in line with legislative requirements and Government guidance.
• Ensure there are sufficient resources in place to accommodate the extra administrative burdens and skills sets needed to implement Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT) for Council-owned homes and over the longer term, monitor the impact on sustainability of communities following implementation of FTT.

• Continue to deliver quality Council stock through the housing and capital investment programmes (see also ‘Creating Sustainable Communities’ summary Chapter 7).

• Maintain the City Council’s ‘Gold Standard’ of homelessness prevention (as mentioned in Chapter 5)

• Procure an upgraded computer system for housing services and ensure that it is aligned with Government reporting requirements and provides a facility for our customers to apply for housing online (new service). We will also ensure that information on our website is updated regularly to assist with early intervention and homelessness prevention.

10.10 The overarching principles, in working towards achieving our ambitious vision and strategic aims, are that the Council must:

• Work in partnership with developers, registered providers, universities and the health sector, statutory partners, community and voluntary sectors, businesses, and neighbouring District Councils to maximise resources and achieve the desired outcomes.
• Deliver efficient and effective services, operate sustainably and prioritise statutory services.
• Target scarce resources to those who are most in need.

10.11 The development of this draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 has been informed by a review of the previous housing, homelessness and empty property strategies, and feedback from stakeholder workshops held in March and April 2017. The strategy runs in parallel to the work on the City Council’s Local Plan 2036.

**Monitoring our Strategy & the Action Plan**

10.12 The draft Strategy Action Plan (Appendix B) sets out actions for the short to medium term of this strategy. We want our strategy and action plan to be as flexible as possible so that the actions we take towards delivery of the priorities are proactive, reactive and are relevant to the changing needs of the Oxford community and any changes in national and local policy. Therefore, the strategy covers a three year period but we intend to review the Action Plan prior to the mid-point of the strategy term. This will ensure that the actions remain relevant and responsive to change. The revised Action Plan will be published on the housing pages of the Council’s website.
Should you need a copy of this document in another language, in large print, Braille or in an audio format, please contact the Strategy and Service Development Team on 01865 249811 or email: strategyandenabling@oxford.gov.uk