Our Local Plan

Tandridge Housing Strategy Precis (2018)

Tandridge District Council
Tandridge Housing Strategy Overview

Introduction

Tandridge District Council are developing a Housing Strategy and an accompanying Action Plan to set and address the local strategic housing priorities that have been identified for all types of housing need in the District, ensuring suitable, good quality, affordable housing is accessible to all. The Housing Strategy also supports the delivery of the Local Plan’s main overarching vision to provide the people of Tandridge with access to homes.

The Local Plan provides strategic objective SO4:

Provide a supply of homes, both affordable and market, which respond to the needs of our community and supports a mixed community. New homes will diversify the existing housing stock in the district, in terms of size and type (e.g. allowing for a range of family housing, entry level homes and opportunities to downsize) and in response to identified needs.

The Housing Strategy demonstrates a joined up approach within the Council to meet housing need by helping to deliver not just the objectives of the Local Plan but also the objectives of the Council’s Corporate Strategy. The Corporate Strategy provides the framework for the Council’s vision for the entire district which is “to be aspirational for our people, our place and ourselves”. This vision encompasses the Council’s role in relation to Tandridge residents and business and its crucial responsibility in relation to the district’s physical natural and built environment. Our key corporate priorities are demonstrated through the graphic below.

The Housing Strategy also has direct links with other Council strategies such as the Homelessness Strategy and the Council’s Allocations Policy and together, these strategies and policies direct how Council services are run and developed to meet housing need.

The Housing Strategy has an important role as it also forms part of the Council’s response to national issues that impact on the Council’s plans for meeting housing need in the Tandridge District. While the Local Plan details local planning policies and sets out how land is to be used in the District and informs how many dwellings are to be developed and in which location, the evidence base and strategic priorities established in the Council’s Housing Strategy will help to support decision making on housing provision within the district, including type, size, tenure and location. The Council’s Housing Strategy is therefore being developed as a shared document for the Council and all its partners: Housing Associations, private landlords, housebuilders, charities and other organisations.

The Council’s Housing Strategy recognises the acute shortage of truly affordable housing in the District and sets out a range of options and actions the Council will take to increase the supply and availability of affordable housing. For example, the Strategy does not just focus solely on the delivery
of new units of housing but considers other options to meet housing need as well, such as a suite of home ownership and intermediate options, bringing empty homes back into use, ensuring appropriate standards are maintained within private sector rented housing and the challenges the Council’s Housing Service faces as a result of welfare reform and legislative change.

Finally, the Strategy will explore opportunities to influence the development of wider issues such as welfare reform which impact on the provision and accessibility of housing locally, through the Council’s memberships of the LGA to ensure that the very real local pressures and concerns at a local level are considered as part of national policy development. The Housing Strategy will also look at encouraging apprenticeships in Housing, which as a specialist sector covering housebuilding, housing officers and housing delivery, requires specialist apprenticeships and linked to specific sector professional membership.

Draft housing strategy priorities

The Housing Strategy is still under development with a consultative draft due to be published towards the end of 2018. However, four draft key strategic priorities have been developed for the Strategy (subject to consultation) as follows:

Priority 1: Creating sustainable communities and meeting our needs;
Priority 2: Improving the quality and the use of existing housing stock;
Priority 3: Meeting the specific needs of vulnerable and low income households.
Priority 4: Apprenticeships in Housing

Priority 1: Creating sustainable communities and meeting our needs

The Council has commissioned a series of technical papers, including a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and is collating localised data to help understand levels of future housing demand, the types of housing needed, affordability, tenures and size. A consultation will be run to obtain the views of residents and partners to help further explore and progress the emerging themes that relate to this Housing Strategy.

Long standing issues already identified under this strategic priority are low grant levels, land availability and financial pressures affecting registered providers but despite these challenges, the Council intends to continue to have a strong focus on delivering new affordable housing units going forward.

Provision of new units by the Council and the Council’s own Housing Company

The Council is itself building new council homes for affordable rent funded through a combination of Right to Buy receipts, HRA reserves and borrowing. At the time of writing (June 2018) 22 units have been completed, 16 units are under construction, 22 units are out to tender and 31 units have planning applications submitted. The Council’s Housing Committee has also given approval to seek planning consent on a further 33 – 37 units. This total of 128 units represents known new dwellings but the Council has committed itself to a continuing programme of homes for rent making use of available financial capacity within the Housing Revenue account and drawing on other sources of funding where available.

To this end the Council is developing a pipeline of schemes to bring forward exploring opportunities to source suitable land for development through the Council’s own land holdings including surplus land/building arising out of the current sheltered housing and garages review, and surplus land owned by other public sector bodies.

1 Although it should be noted that if these are sheltered housing schemes, they cannot be counted in the housing land supply.
The Council is creating its own Housing Company to directly deliver a range of housing tenures to address identified gaps in the local market, in particular affordable housing, and to also support the local economy in doing so. To further promote the accessibility of shared home ownership and intermediate housing products, specific research has also been commissioned covering the availability of different shared home ownership products to enable the Council to support as many people as possible in owning their own home in this high cost housing area (and in particular young people who struggle to get onto the housing ladder). The Housing Strategy will link with Economic Proposition for the District and will seek to understand employment challenges for the District such as recruitment and retention in the District, the skills base and any gaps in skill, which will support decisions made about access to shared home ownership products.

**Housing provided by housing associations and developers**

The Council recognises that housing associations and developers have played a key role in the supply of affordable housing in the district in past years and will continue to do so into the future. The Council’s Housing Strategy will develop policies to ensure that housing built within the district includes a proportion of affordable housing to meet local need, and that supply rather than a commuted sum will be a preference. The Council will consult with developers and housing associations to understand the issues faced in the provision of affordable housing on planning policy sites in its development of a policy framework and will seek to ensure that affordable provision reflects need within the district.

The Council will also consult with housing associations about how it can support housing associations in the development of affordable homes.

The Local Plan sets out the vision of developing a new garden community of around 4000 homes to help meet the demand for new homes of all tenures in the District. The development of a new garden community is considered to be the most effective way of providing new homes for people, while protecting the green belt from a scattergun approach towards development. Developing new homes on a centralised site enables the better delivery of proper infrastructure to support these new homes and also prevent the overdevelopment of already built up areas. The Area Action Plan (AAP) developed for the garden community, makes it clear to developers that at least 1000 of the homes to be delivered for garden community shall be affordable homes, including shared ownership, self-build and other rented homes to which the Council will have nomination rights on behalf of Tandridge residents.

**Gypsy/Travellers and Travelling Show people provision**

The Council is required to undertake and publish a Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to provide a robust evidence base which supports the development of clear and reasonable planning policies designed to meet the needs of gypsies/travellers and show people (collectively called ‘travellers’ in the remainder of this section).

For the purposes of the GTAA, Gypsies and Travellers live on pitches on sites and show people live on plots in yards.

In 2017, Tandridge Council updated its GTAA to take into account changes to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) introduced in 2015. The updated GTAA identified that there is a current and future need of 5 pitches and 21 plots between 2016 and 2033.

Whilst the Local Plan’s Spatial Strategy does not identify a preferred location for traveller development at this point, it is seeking to accommodate development needs on Green Belt sites where very special circumstances can be demonstrated and where it accords with national policy requirements. It is also envisaged that the Garden Community will also accommodate some of this need but this needs to be determined through the forthcoming Area Action Plan and associated Master planning exercises.

There are also two live planning applications that could be supported, subject to planning committee approval, which potentially comply with the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and the emerging policy and would meet the 5 gypsy pitches that are required.
**Ex service personnel**

The Strategy will explore how the Council can better support those leaving the armed forces and promote the services and help available to them. The Council recognises that some ex services personnel experience housing difficulties when leaving the military and returning to civilian life and that access to good quality advice and support is essential.

To recognise the commitment and sacrifices made by those who serve or have previously served in the military and their families, Tandridge Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2014. Signing the Covenant reaffirms our commitment to supporting and working closely these groups of people. The Council has also appointed a Member lead to be the Council’s Armed Forces Champion.

**Priority 2: Improving the quality and the use of existing housing stock**

**The private rented sector**

This strategic priority will have a particular focus on the important role the private rented sector has in meeting housing need and the Council is committed to ensuring there is a high level of engagement with private landlords to ensure that the private rented sector in the district is well managed and maintained.

As part of the development of this Housing Strategy there will be an evaluation of activity undertaken by the Council’s Private Sector Housing Team to identify trends, for example, an increase in filthy and verminous properties which indicate wider issues that need addressing such as mental health, support and social isolation. The activities to be monitored include:

- the number and types of complaints received by the team;
- details of licensable and non-licensable houses in multi occupation;
- residential mobile home sites and activity under the Mobile Homes Act 2013;
- Disabled Facility Grant activity.

Through the development of this Housing Strategy, the Council will demonstrate its commitment to supporting good landlords and protecting tenants from rogue landlords and will seek to maximise the affordable element of the private rented sector using incentives such as, for example, exploring the viability of an in house landlord accreditation scheme.

The Strategy will consider the impacts of welfare reform and in particular the changes to Housing Benefit and the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit and new legislation regarding regulation of the private rental sector. The private rental sector needs to meet the housing needs of a variety of different groups from families to young professionals and the Housing Strategy will explore how the Council can best support and extend all forms of privately rented accommodation.

**Stock condition and energy efficiency**

The Council will seek to collate data on the condition of the housing stock in the District but the Council is also giving consideration to commissioning a stock condition survey in future to inform the Council’s policies and strategic approach. The Strategy will also explore the opportunities for data capture data by the shortly to be set up Locality Teams who will be working out in our communities.

Any data capture, including a stock condition survey, would include an evaluation of the energy efficiency of homes in the District and this is an important factor in the development of this Housing Strategy as some of the Districts housing stock does not benefit from main gas connection which can lead to fuel poverty and the poor health of any occupants. The Strategy will also consider the options for the development and promotion of “Green Homes” and will explore the use of renewable energy and the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures and energy saving technologies.

**Empty homes**
Central Government has a clear focus on empty homes demonstrated by its policy to allow increased council tax on empty properties and providing incentives to bring empty properties back into use through New Homes Bonus. Through the development of the Housing Strategy, the Council will continue to develop the work being undertaken to bring empty properties back into use and try to link this directly with the reduction of homelessness, demonstrating how making best use of the local housing stock can meet a number of strategic and corporate priorities.

**Allocations policy**

The developed Housing Strategy will also influence and give future direction to the Council’s Allocations Policy which sets out how the Council will make best use of the social housing stock in the District, ensuring that only people with a housing need, a local connection and insufficient financial means to source their own housing can access social housing. The Allocations Policy also addresses under-occupation in social housing stock and facilitates access to affordable rural housing schemes through the use of local lettings plans, thereby promoting the sustainability of our rural villages and economy. The Local Plan also includes the promotion of rural exception sites. Further, the Allocations he policy ensures that adapted properties for disabled people go to those who need them most.

**Maintaining the Council’s own stock**

Tandridge Council has retained its housing stock and has an investment and maintenance programme to ensure that its owned housing stock is well maintained and that its own properties meet the decent homes standard. The development of this Housing Strategy will use information held on in house systems to help inform the Council’s investment programme how best to modernise and/or re-designate housing stock converting hard to let properties so they can better meet housing need. This information can be used to facilitate enable decisions on priority repairs for tenants for example: window replacement, bathroom and kitchen refurbishment, energy efficiency and central heating. The review and remodelling of sheltered housing is also providing opportunities to make better use of a number of homes and improve the targeting of services and develop an approach to the regular review of existing stock ensuring its continuing usefulness in meeting housing need.

**Maintaining the housing association sector**

The stock of housing association properties within the district is an important role in meeting housing need. The Housing Strategy will recognise this, ensure its continued effectiveness in meeting need and ensure its continued usefulness where stock is transferred to other associations.

**Priority 3: Meeting the specific needs of vulnerable and low income households.**

**Homelessness**

This strategic priority will consider at a high level the levels of homeless households in the District, including rough sleeping and also the reasons for homelessness related activity in both a local and national context. Short and medium term actions to address homelessness issues in the District will be set out in the Council’s Homelessness Strategy to be published 2018/2019.

Ensuring the Council takes all necessary steps to support people to find and maintain a home is essential to the District’s prosperity. Affordable, good quality housing is necessary to improve health, to secure and keep employment and educational achievement. Preventing homelessness and helping people to stay in their homes also creates sustainable communities. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, the most significant piece of homelessness legislation since 1977, was enacted in April 2018 and this legislation placed new duties on local authorities to intervene earlier in cases where there is a risk of homelessness and to take reasonable and documented steps to help those who become homeless to find and secure alternative housing. Linked to maintaining and finding accommodation is support to try to mitigate the impact of welfare reform, money and debt advice, financial assistance with deposits and rent in advance, finding work, health and wellbeing and severe weather provision. The Council also funds specialist outreach support for single homeless people who are sofa surfing or rough sleeping.
**Supported housing**

There are a wide range of client groups that require specialist supported housing. As part of this strategic priority, the Council will, with partners, map existing services and identify gaps in provision and undertake an evaluation of future housing need. The range of clients that are supported through specialist accommodation and advice services include the following:

- Mental health;
- Learning disability;
- Physical or sensory disability;
- Single homeless;
- Rough sleepers;
- Substance misuse;
- HIV/AIDS;
- Older people with support needs;
- Frail elderly;
- Dementia;
- Young people;
- Teenage parents;
- Domestic abuse;
- Offenders.

The Council works with Surrey Adult Social Care and a number of specialist agencies to provide these services and will consult with these organisations and service users through the development of the Housing Strategy.

When developing the Housing Strategy, the Council will also need to take into account the impact of welfare reform on supported housing and in particular, the fact that the exemption from the benefit cap for supported housing is only in place until 2019. After the exemption is removed, a new, top up funding arrangement will be in place, the impact of which will need to be considered as part of the development of this strategy.

**Handy person service and disabled facility grants**

The Strategy will recognise the importance of ensuring that there is support to enable owner occupiers to maintain their homes through the Handy Person service and there is fair and equal access to Disabled Facilities Grants to enable people to live independently and live in their own homes in both the owner occupied, private and socially rented sectors. The Council continues to receive an allocation of funding for DFGs from central government thereby highlighting the importance of DFGs going forward to relieve pressure on other public services. Access to this funding is means tested unless it is for a child.

**Tandridge community alarm service (Surrey Telecare)**

This service uses an alarm to provide 24 hour, 365 day remote support to ill, vulnerable or elderly people living in the Tandridge District. The alarm can be linked in to other sensors such as an intruder alarm, smoke alarm and a fall detector to provide even more support. There is a charge for this service. This technology promotes independence and saves funding for other public services such as Adult Social Care as it reduces the costs of care packages provided to vulnerable people who live alone.

The department of health believes that 3 million people can benefit from the use of telehealth and telecare services. The Conservative Government set out in their ‘3 Million Lives’ initiative in 2011, the aim to give 3 million people access to assistive technologies to improve their health and wellbeing. NHS South of England, which covers Surrey, Kent and Sussex, signed a contract with the South East Health Technologies Alliance (SEHTA) to create closer collaboration between the NHS and the technology companies developing new healthcare technologies as they provide an even better
Sheltered housing and extra care housing.

Sheltered housing is one housing option that is available to people over aged 60 and over (and in some instances those aged 55 plus) that contributes towards people’s ability to live independently, in a home of their choice for as long as they want to. Sheltered housing is available to rent from the Council, housing associations or other charities or alternatively to buy and where it is built by private property developers it is managed by them also. The Council is committed to providing the type and choice of sheltered housing that would meet current and future tenant expectations and this will be reflected the newly developed Housing Strategy.

The Council undertook a full scale review of its existing sheltered housing stock 2016. This review established that much of the sheltered housing stock was built over 30 years ago and that while the Council had undertaken building works and repairs to ensure that all properties met Decent Homes Standards, many properties did not reflect modern expectations in terms of accessibility and ease of use for those with mobility problems or other disabilities. Added to these issues around the age and physical design of the schemes, many Council owned sheltered schemes are located in parts of the District from which it is more difficult to access services; such as a GP surgery or shops due to firstly, a lack of public transport and secondly, the distance of the sheltered housing from larger centres of population. Relative to other more modern sheltered housing schemes provided elsewhere, most in the District are also relatively small – from as few as 1 unit (legacy units still receiving a sheltered support service despite the scheme having been re-designated in past reviews) to a total of 37 units.

At the time of this review 2016, there was a projected 32% increase in the number of Tandridge residents aged 65 + by 2020s and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has updated this information in 2018 for the Local Plan. Through the development of this Housing Strategy, the Council will undertake further work with partners to update information on levels of need for older people in the District and the type of housing, adaptions and facilities that they need as it is widely recognised that people are now living longer and with more complex needs that are supported by advances in medical treatment.

The review of sheltered housing undertaken in 2016 identified that many Council owned sheltered properties were difficult to let due to their age and design and because of this, many properties had ended up being let to people who did not have support needs and who were only in their 50’s.

The Housing Strategy will also recognise that in order to fully meet the needs of older people, the focus should be on quality and not quantity of units and that investment should be made in schemes where older people in real need of the support available in sheltered housing can be housed, as this is more preferable than trying to mix age groups from 50+ with little, if any, support needs, with those aged 85+ with complex support needs.

The Housing Strategy will also set out more fully, the options and priority for re-designating and improving sheltered housing identified, reducing numbers of Council owned sheltered units overall to focus on the quality of what is being provided so that the housing needs of an increasingly older and, more likely, frailer population can be met.

While the Council has confirmed its commitment to continuing to meet the housing needs of older people, including those older people who are frailer, consideration needs to be given to the fact that Housing Related Support (HRS) is no longer available from Surrey County Council (SCC). Housing Related Support (HRS) was funding provided to pay for support, over and above what a landlord is ordinarily responsible for providing, to help people either move towards independent living or maintain their independence and covers help to resolve problems with their tenancy maximise their income, access social networks avoiding isolation and health services. It does not include the provision of personal care. HRS successfully prevented the need for more costly interventions – e.g. hospital admissions and registered care.
However, SCC have needed to make significant savings and after consultation stopped funding HRS for older and disabled people from April 2018. Importantly, support is available for those who need it most as SCC have taken steps to reserve 30% of the HRS budget to fund any eligible needs identified following and individual care assessment under the Care Act. The money granted to pay for additional support needs under the Care Act would then be paid directly by SCC to the recipient as a personal budget, rather than to a support agency under a contract to deliver a set number of hours of housing related support a week or to fund a Council employed Warden, who is employed to manage and support tenants in Council owned sheltered housing schemes.

The newly developed housing strategy will establish an evidence base which supports priorities for sheltered housing to ensure that:

- the service offer for sheltered housing is consistently based upon need;
- strategies are in place to promote individual wellbeing and inclusion;
- schemes are utilised more effectively as hubs for services and service delivery;
- fuel poverty is reduced by promoting energy efficiency measures;
- low cost shared home ownership options for the elderly are explored; the positive use of assistive technologies are explored and publicised; benefits publicised;
- Opportunities to develop extra care or very sheltered housing are explored for the most frail people to reduce the need for early admission into residential care.

**Health and wellbeing**

The Council views Health and wellbeing as being a key development area in the new Housing Strategy.

The Council created the Tandridge Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) in 2013 to take forward Surrey’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy at a local level. It has representation from a range of organisations including Adult and Children’s Social Care, Public Health, East Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group (ESCCG), First Community Health, East Surrey Carers, Tandridge Trust Leisure (TTL) and Tandridge Voluntary Service Council and is chaired by the Council’s lead Member for health. The purpose of the Board is to lead and co-ordinate work undertaken to improve the health of all Tandridge residents and to reduce health inequalities by ensuring services are delivered effectively and there is joined up commissioning. The Board aims to provide preventative services as it is recognised that targeted prevention reduces the need for more expensive, intensive services later on such as hospitalisation or residential care. The Board has a particular focus on:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing;
- Encourage people to be a healthy weight and;
- To reduce levels of excess drinking.

More recently the HWBB has extended funding to support a money advice service for Tandridge residents as people who have issues with debt often have higher incidents of mental health problems and obesity.

The developed Housing Strategy will recognise that good quality housing is a wider determinant of good health and that a good quality home is essential to health and wellbeing at all stages of life. The Strategy will explore the link between housing and health and will seek to identify opportunities for partnership working to make effective plans to improve health and wellbeing through the places people live.

The Council’s Housing Strategy will develop local housing priorities to help address the risks to health from living in:

- Cold damp or otherwise hazardous homes (an unhealthy home);
- A home that doesn’t meet the household’s needs due to risks such as being overcrowded or inaccessible to a disabled or older person (an unsuitable home);
- A home that does not provide a sense of safety and security including precarious living circumstances and/or homelessness (an unstable home);
The Housing Strategy will also explore and identify local priorities to ensure housing contributes towards improved health and wellbeing and helps to prevent physical and mental ill health by enabling people to:

- manage their own health and care needs, including long term conditions;
- Live independently, safely and well in their own home for as long as they choose;
- complete treatment and recovery from substance misuse, tuberculosis or other ill health;
- move on successfully from homelessness or other traumatic life event;
- access and sustain education, training and employment;
- participate and contribute to society and;
- supports education.

The right home environment is essential to delivering NHS England’s Five Year Forward View, and local authority plans for social care. The Strategy will also explore and identify local housing priorities to ensure how good quality housing can:

- delay and reduce the need for primary care and social care
- prevent hospital admissions
- enable timely discharge from hospital, and prevent re-admissions
- enable rapid recovery from periods of ill health or planned admissions.

Responding to the Health and Wellbeing agenda is not something the Council can do in isolation. As part of this Strategy’s development the Council will work with service users, partners and stakeholders to identify best practice building design principles and to obtain the views of these important groups and consult with service users, partners and stakeholders to deliver housing that support the above aims through the Local Plan.

The Council also recognises that pets can contribute significantly to the wellbeing of tenants and will explore further the development and availability of pet friendly tenancy policies in all social housing.

Priority 4: Apprenticeships in housing

The Government has set out its ambition for the public sector to lead the way in equipping young people for the future and has set public sector organisations with 250 employees or more a target to employ at least 2.3% of the workforce as new apprentice starts between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2021. In response to this the Council has implemented a comprehensive Apprenticeship Programme across the Council to demonstrate its commitment to being a community employer and to provide targeted opportunities for young people to access a career in the public sector.

Further to this, the Housing Strategy will evaluate the impact of the existing apprenticeships offered within Housing and identify whether there are any possibilities for more apprenticeships covering careers such as skilled tradesmen, technical officers and managers.

The Housing Strategy will also take steps to evaluate how apprenticeships can assist with workforce planning in the sector following the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty in 2017 which set in motion Britain’s plans to leave the European Union in 2019 or “Brexit”. As a result of the impact of Brexit, the future shape of the labour market, employment law and immigration policy, as well the length and duration of any transition period is uncertain and the Council, as both an employer and provider of services needs to be able to anticipate any impacts from this and respond swiftly to enable business objectives to continue to be met. For example, the Housing Strategy could explore the potential to link local colleges and schools with housing developers as part of the Council’s residential development activity as one way of developing a skilled future workforce.

**Monitoring of the strategy**
All key objectives developed for this strategy will be subject to relevant impact assessments which encompass health and equality impacts.

A steering group of key Council staff will meet quarterly to monitor the progress of the Action Plan developed for the strategy and a bi-annual report will be taken to Housing Committee to also report on progress.

A series of key performance indicators will be developed as the detailed project work and policy development arising from this Strategy emerges to measure its effectiveness and impact.