

APPENDIX 1

# Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021



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## Foreword

Welcome to Oxford City Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21. Oxford faces huge housing challenges, and tackling them is an essential priority for the City Council.

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 and replaces 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 were 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 strategy has been informed by stakeholder and public views, and runs in parallel to the work on the City Council's Local Plan 2036. Delivery of this strategy will be monitored and the Action Plan reviewed mid-point of the strategy term. I commend this strategy and action plan to you and look forward to delivering many of the objectives in collaboration with our partners, stakeholders and customers.

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)<sup>1</sup> which is set to grow to 182,300 by 2031 (based on local population growth of 15,000 every 10 years)<sup>2</sup>
- 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.
- 32,970 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

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/459/oxfords\\_population](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/459/oxfords_population)

<sup>2</sup> Data source: [www.visionofbritain.org.uk/England & Wales Censuses](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/England%20&%20Wales/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 - 2020; which will impact on money available for the Council's housing services.
- 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 sets out additional duties for Councils to prevent homelessness. The Act will be implemented from April 2018. In terms of homelessness prevention, 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.
- Implications of the Government's emerging green paper on social housing in England, that promises a wide-ranging review of the issues facing the sector (including: quality of social homes, the rights of tenants, service management, tackling homelessness, tackling illegal sub-letting and the wider issues of community and the local economy).
- The Government's proposals for funding housing costs for sheltered and Extra Care accommodation and housing costs for short term supported

accommodation. The Government's Consultation paper launched in October 2017, suggests the introduction of a Sheltered Rent from 2020 and ring-fenced grant allocations to Local Authorities for short-term supported accommodation.

- 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 Oxfordshire Growth Board on an ambitious and comprehensive programme for investment in infrastructure, housing and economic growth which will help deliver sustainable development and a focus on quality of place and more affordable housing. As part of this, the Oxfordshire authorities and OxLEP<sup>3</sup> have agreed a housing and growth deal with government to include investment in infrastructure and affordable housing, an Oxfordshire-wide Joint Statutory Spatial Plan and the ambition for 100,000 homes by 2031. The detailed proposals will be developed in 2018 and subject to agreement by all councils will provide additional funding for affordable housing in Oxford as part of the Oxfordshire wide investment.
- The National Infrastructure Commission's report on the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor makes recommendations to Government to maximise the economic potential of the area. It recommends a significant increase in the number of homes across the corridor and makes recommendations about investment in infrastructure required to deliver them. Government has welcomed the report and will respond in full in 2018. This could bring further opportunities to invest in infrastructure and housing.

(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.

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<sup>3</sup> OxLEP - The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) is responsible for championing and developing the Oxfordshire economy, through robust and effective relationships between businesses, academia and the public sector.

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. The opportunity to work collaboratively and explore opportunities to co-design services in order to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping is of great importance. The ‘City Conversation’ meeting held in November 2017 with stakeholders, voluntary and community sector and people with lived experience of homelessness, started the work towards meeting this objective. 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 communication and 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).

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## 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**

Task	End of Year 2015/2016	End of Year 2016/2017	Target
Homeless Prevention Cases	1170	1107	1100
Duty interviews	1678	1395	
Homeless applications taken	221	215	
Homeless accepted decisions	141	125	
Number of households in temporary accommodation	115	96	120
Home Choice applicants – New Starts	71	79	
Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee Scheme (New Starts)	8	6	
Tenancy Sustainment referrals	209	224	
Social tenure properties let from a Council offer or nomination	629	516	
Properties released through the incentives scheme for under-occupying Council tenants to	42	50	42



downsize their home.			
Total Rough Sleepers (annual)	357	383	300

## 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 323 in November 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).

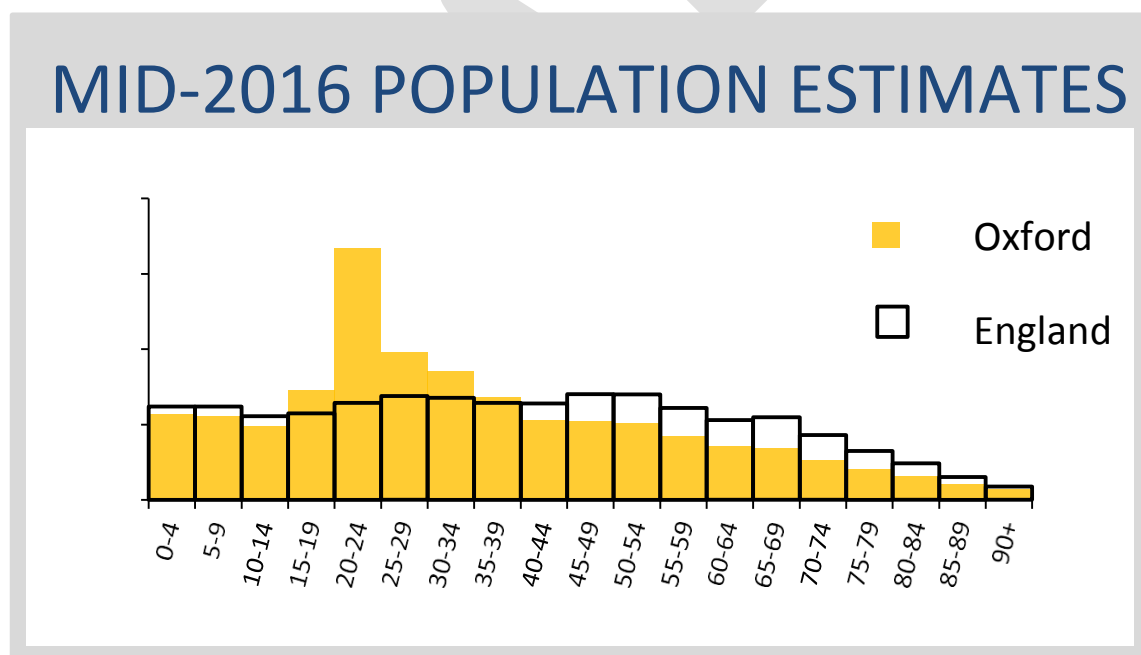
### 3. Oxford's Housing Challenge

#### 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)<sup>4</sup> which is set to grow to around 180,000 by 2036<sup>5</sup>. 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.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/459/oxfords\\_population](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/459/oxfords_population)

<sup>5</sup> ONS 2014-based subnational population projections

- 3.4 During 2015-2016 house prices in Oxford rose by 8.5%<sup>6</sup> 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%<sup>7</sup>. 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.

### FIG 3.1 Private Rental Market Statistics

Summary of monthly rents recorded between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 by administrative area for England

Accommodation Type	Oxford Median Rent	Oxfordshire Median Rent	England Median Rent
Room only	530	525	376
1 bedroom	941	795	595
2 bedroom	1,150	925	650
3 bedroom	1,425	1,200	735
4 bedroom minimum	2,200	1,950	1,300

Source: Valuation Office Agency

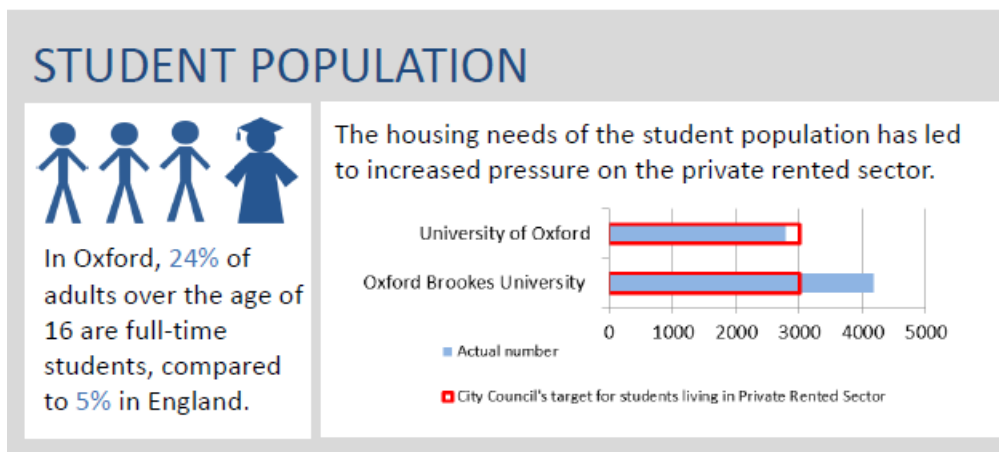
- 3.7 Welfare Reform changes are also impacting on the Council's ability to accommodate homeless households in the private rented sector within the City. As a consequence, households who are unable to afford to buy or privately rent accommodation in the City are considering other 'out of area' options. 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.

<sup>6</sup> Cities Outlook 2017 - Centre for Cities (Jan 2017) report

<sup>7</sup> Hometrack UK Cities House Price Index, March 2017 (See Appendix A)

## Student Accommodation

3.8



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. Although the Government has issued new methodology for calculating unmet housing needs, it still remains that the City needs thousands more homes to meet the housing needs of a growing population and to support economic growth. 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

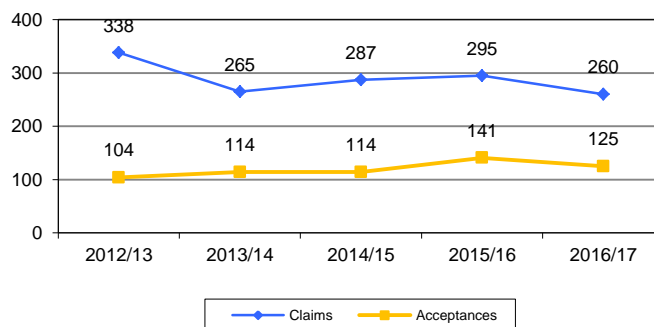
- 3.11 The social and affordable rented accommodation in Oxford includes:
- 7,746 Council-owned dwellings and
  - 3,753 dwellings that are owned, let and managed by Registered Provider partners, over which the council has nomination rights.
  - Since 2013, there have been 156 Council properties sold 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.

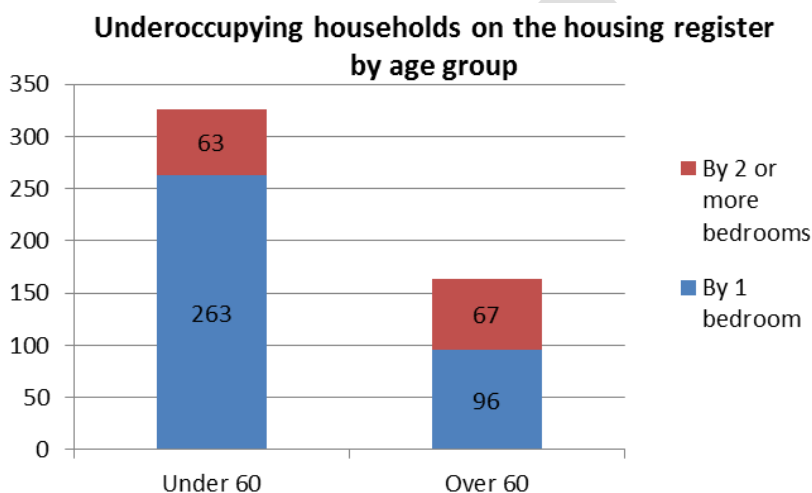
## Affordable housing need (general)

- 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.

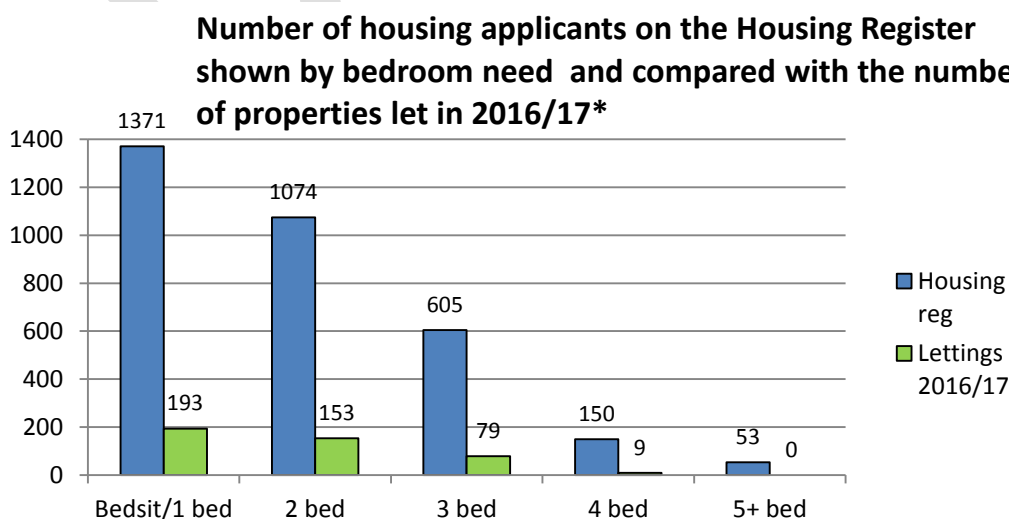
## Affordable housing need – Housing Register

- 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).



\*Excludes applicants requiring sheltered accommodation and lettings of sheltered properties

3.18 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**

3.19 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.

3.20 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. See also Appendix A.

## HOMELESSNESS AND YOUNGER PEOPLE

In 2016, customers approaching Oxford City Council's homelessness services:

48%

- Most of the 48% were non-priority single males
- More likely to originate from some of the most deprived areas in Oxfordshire



Aged 18 to 35

2015/16

2 out of 5

People new to rough sleeping in Oxford were aged under 35

In July 2017, there were 268 households on the City Council's housing register that were single and aged under 35. Of these:

35%

Aged 18 to 25

65%

Aged 26 to 34

- 3.22 The need for shared or bedsit accommodation by people under 35 years of age may increase in the near future. The shared accommodation rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) applies to single people under 35 years old (who do not have children living with them) renting accommodation in the private sector. It was originally Government policy to extend the LHA to all social sector lettings, but in October 2017 the Government reversed this policy and confirmed that this would not happen.
- 3.23 However, for those single people under 35, there is a possibility that there will be a shortfall between the contractual private sector rent and LHA, leading to the increased risk of accumulating rent arrears and possibly eviction where the shortfall cannot be covered from their income. This will need to be taken into account when the City Council discharges its homelessness duty into the private rented sector where there is a lack of available social rented housing.
- 3.24 From April 2017, the Government removed the Housing Costs element of Universal Credit for single 18-21 year olds, meaning this group will be excluded from help with their housing costs. 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. Working in partnership with the City Council's Welfare Reform Team will help to identify any potential to maximise income generation and reduce rent arrears.

## Young People's Supported Housing

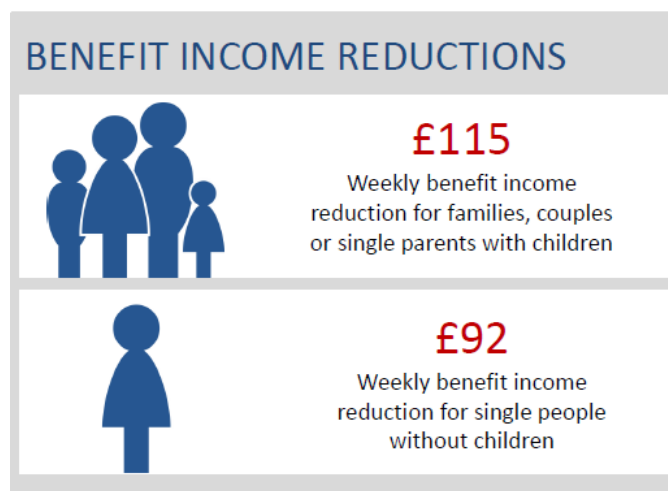
- 3.26 In Oxford, the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway is for vulnerable and homeless 16 – 22 year olds in Oxfordshire who need supported accommodation to gain and maintain independence skills, to be facilitated into education, employment or training, and to gain the knowledge and skills to make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



- 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 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (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 in accordance with the City Council's Allocations Scheme, current housing legislation and local connection criteria. The City Council is also signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. 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 SSAFA, 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, as well as health and social care professionals contributing to the wider health agenda. 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 and capital to support the delivery of key staff accommodation to sustain local economic growth and continued delivery of essential services. We are looking at how we can support this through planning policies as part of the new Oxford Local Plan (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.

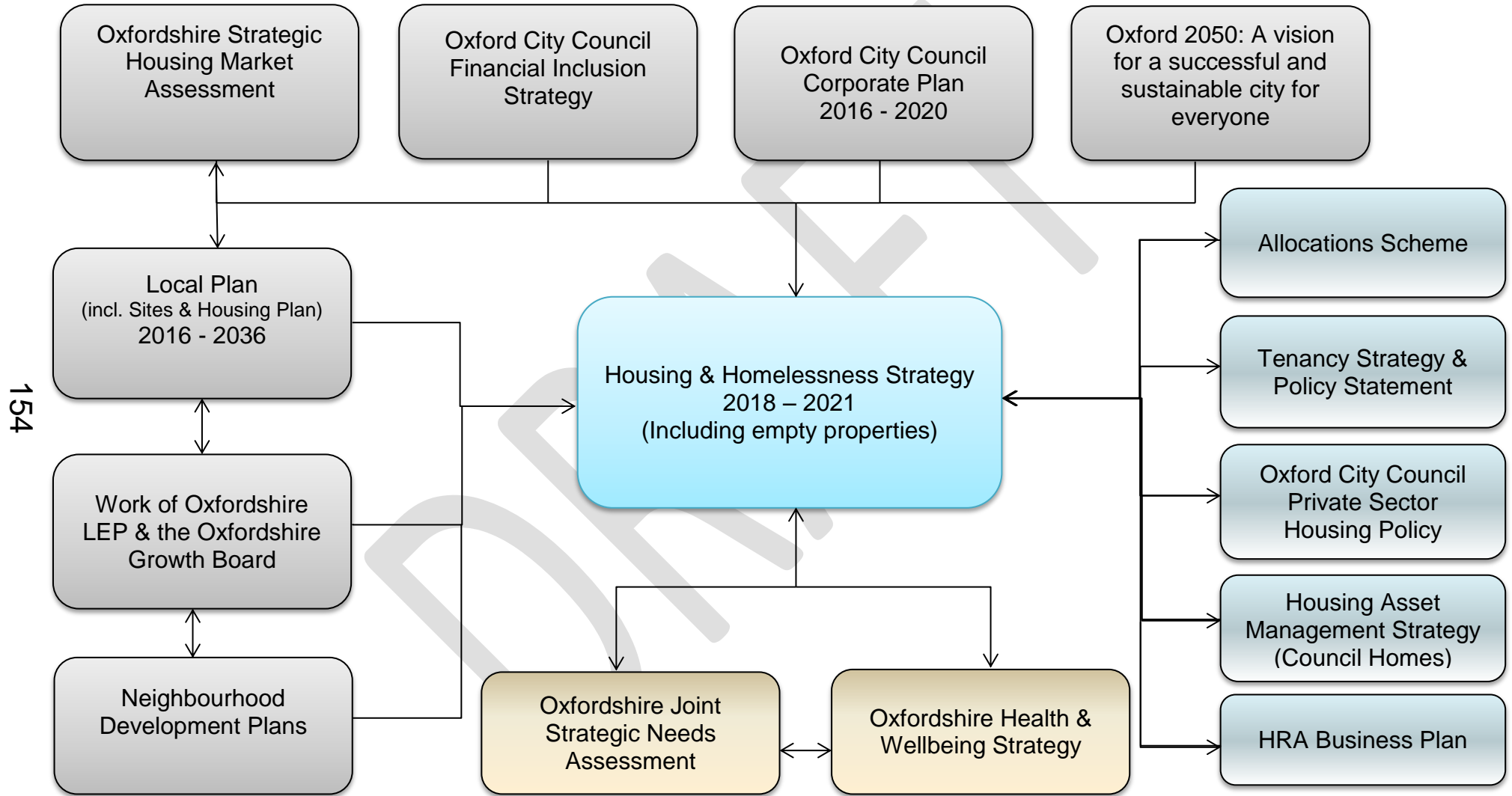
## **Accommodation needs of Bargees and River/Boat Dwellers**

- 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 2036.
- 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.

**FIG 3.2 Where the Housing & Homelessness Strategy fits**





## 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, community-led housing organisations, and others as appropriate 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).

4.1 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.

#### **LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2016 - 36**

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

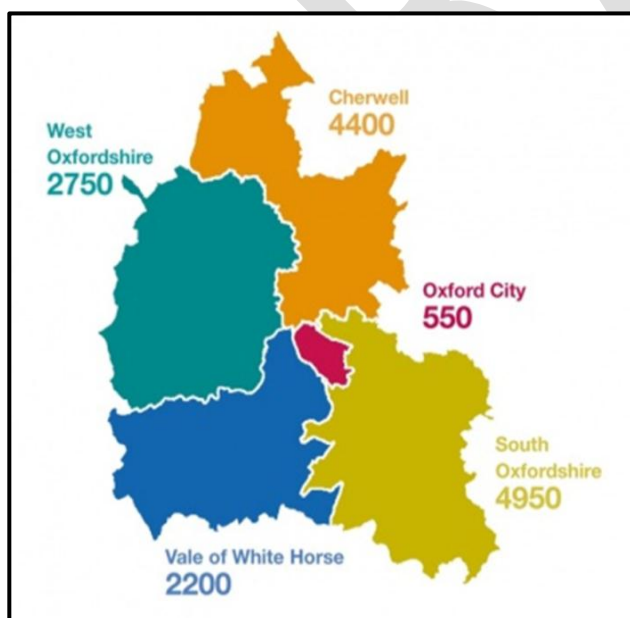
4.4 Issues being addressed in the new Plan are:

- 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.

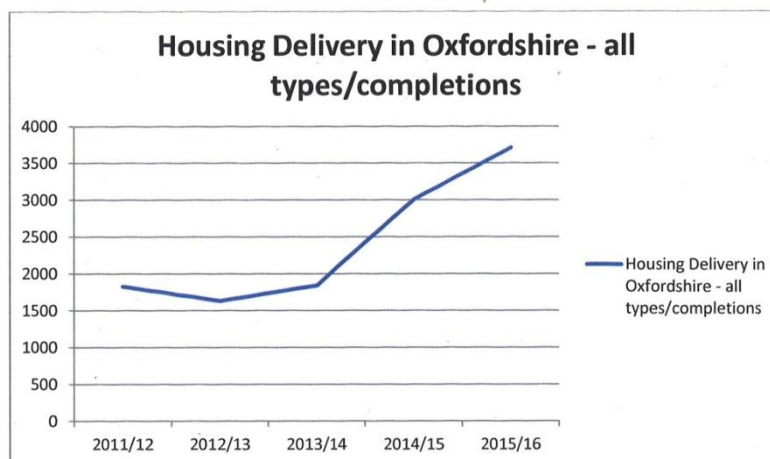


**FIG 4.1** Apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need to be delivered in each Oxfordshire District Authority area - agreed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

<sup>8</sup> <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**



Housing completions (net)	Cherwell	Oxford	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse	West Oxfordshire	Totals
2011/12	356	228	508	376	359	1827
2012/13	340	213	476	326	278	1633
2013/14	410	215	484	548	186	1843
2014/15	946	332	613	724	395	3010
2015/16	1425	383	602	1061	246	3717
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3477</b>	<b>1371</b>	<b>2683</b>	<b>3035</b>	<b>1464</b>	<b>12030</b>

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 working together on an ambitious and comprehensive programme for investment in infrastructure, housing and economic growth. This includes a Countywide assessment of infrastructure requirements (Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy or OxIS) and agreement to develop a County-wide joint spatial plan. As part of this on-going work to attract long term investment to support housing and economic delivery, the Oxfordshire authorities and OxLEP have agreed a housing and growth deal with government to include investment in infrastructure and affordable housing. The detailed proposals will be developed in 2018 and subject to agreement by

all councils, will provide additional funding for affordable housing in Oxford as part of the Oxfordshire-wide investment.

- 4.12 There are a number of more detailed matters which are now being 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 an 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 2016/17, 373 (net) new homes were completed in Oxford. This is close to the 400 dwellings per year annualised target set in the Core Strategy.

Of the 373 homes delivered in 2016/17:

- There was one development of 10 or more dwellings where the requirement for on-site provision of affordable homes applied.
- 295 units of student accommodation were completed, which are counted as the equivalent to 59 new dwellings.
- No new care home rooms – net loss of six care rooms.
- There were 20 new affordable homes developed (all shared ownership) compared to 164 new affordable homes provided in 2015/16 (of which 102 were social rent and 62 intermediate tenure).
- In addition, the City Council secured £183,450 in financial contributions towards affordable housing delivery across Oxford from small sites of 4-9 homes and from student accommodation (the financial contribution was £375,620 in 2015/16). 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.

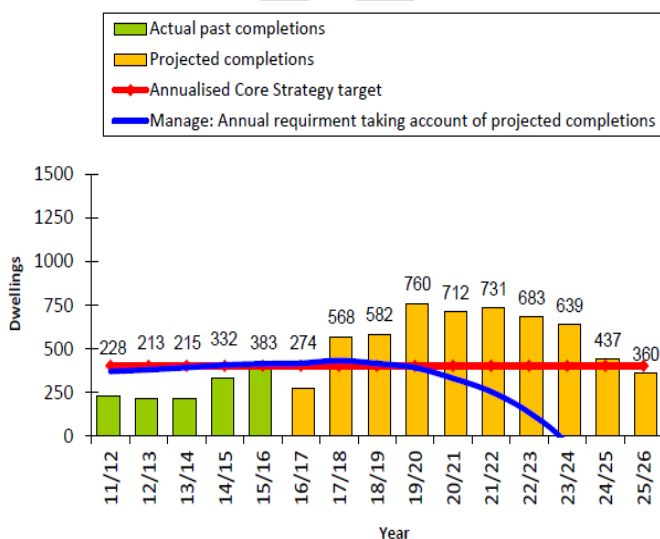
**FIG 4.3 Dwellings Delivered/Completed in Oxford 2006 - 2016**

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

**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 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 was, 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 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. This includes, where there is evidence of need, development of specialist accommodation to meet the needs of people with physical or mental disabilities and where suitable housing is a key requirement for them to live healthy and sustainable lives. Such accommodation will assist in reducing the demand on high-level care and support services, and will contribute towards meeting statutory duties under the Care Act.



## 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 indicated a change in emphasis towards a wider range of tenures. In particular the White Paper proposed 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 Government Guidance is awaited on the proposals put forward in the White Paper, however, the new proposed definition of affordable housing places more emphasis on properties that are sold or rented at sub market prices. It also strengthens the position that eligibility should be determined with regard to local

incomes and local house prices and emphasises that 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, and supports the delivery of homes that are affordable now and in perpetuity.
- 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<sup>9</sup> (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. In addition, we will explore ways of prioritising affordable home ownership for people with a local connection to the City.

### **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 were 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.

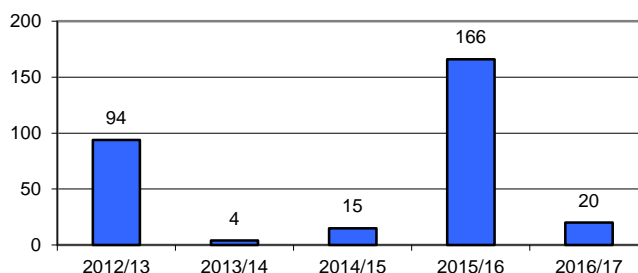
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<sup>9</sup> Similar calculation used as part of Oxfordshire SHMA 2014

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 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.

**New affordable homes delivered 2012/13 to 2016/17**



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

Number of Units	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
<b>Total affordable housing</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>2050</b>
Social rent	39	92	248	360	502	415	1656
Shared ownership	29	10	36	90	125	104	394
<b>Sites over 30 units</b>	37	19					0
Northway Sites							
Barton Park	6	41	38	90	90	89	354
Northern Gateway			40	70	70	70	250
Oxpens			20	40	50	40	150
Blackbird Leys Central Area				50	50	50	150
Knights Road				40			40
OCH Programme			122				122
Temple Cowley Pool		24					24
Littlemore Park			10	70	55		135
Sandford Road			20	20	30		70
Diamond Place					30	20	50
Kassam Stadium					30	30	60
Templars Square					40		40
Nielsens					40	35	75
Wolvercote Paper Mill				40	40	15	95
<b>Sites under 30 units</b>	25	18	34	30	102	170	379
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>1994</b>

(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 (including specialist and move-on accommodation where there is evidence of need).

#### **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 by 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 indicated 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.<sup>10</sup>

### 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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<sup>10</sup> Oxford's Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20270/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding/1120/register-your-interest-in-self-build-and-custom-housebuilding>

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

**To reduce rough sleeping and single homelessness we will:**

- Increase our focus on early intervention and preventing single homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Work to establish a city-wide partnership that works collaboratively to deliver effective, long-term solutions to rough sleeping and homelessness, and the creation of an agreed City-wide framework for Oxford.
- Ensure provision of a proactive and collaborative 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

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The Council's two main priorities have, and continue to be, to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place and getting people back into accommodation once they find themselves homeless (in accordance with legislative requirements). Going forward, we envisage this approach will be further strengthened through 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 lead to stigmatisation, loss of dignity and can have devastating effects on many aspects of individual 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'.<sup>11</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> Source: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://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.

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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

- 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, Crisis 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. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) top ups are also used to prevent homelessness. **Fig. 5.1** shows in more detail some of the work undertaken in the Housing Options and homelessness prevention customer pathway.

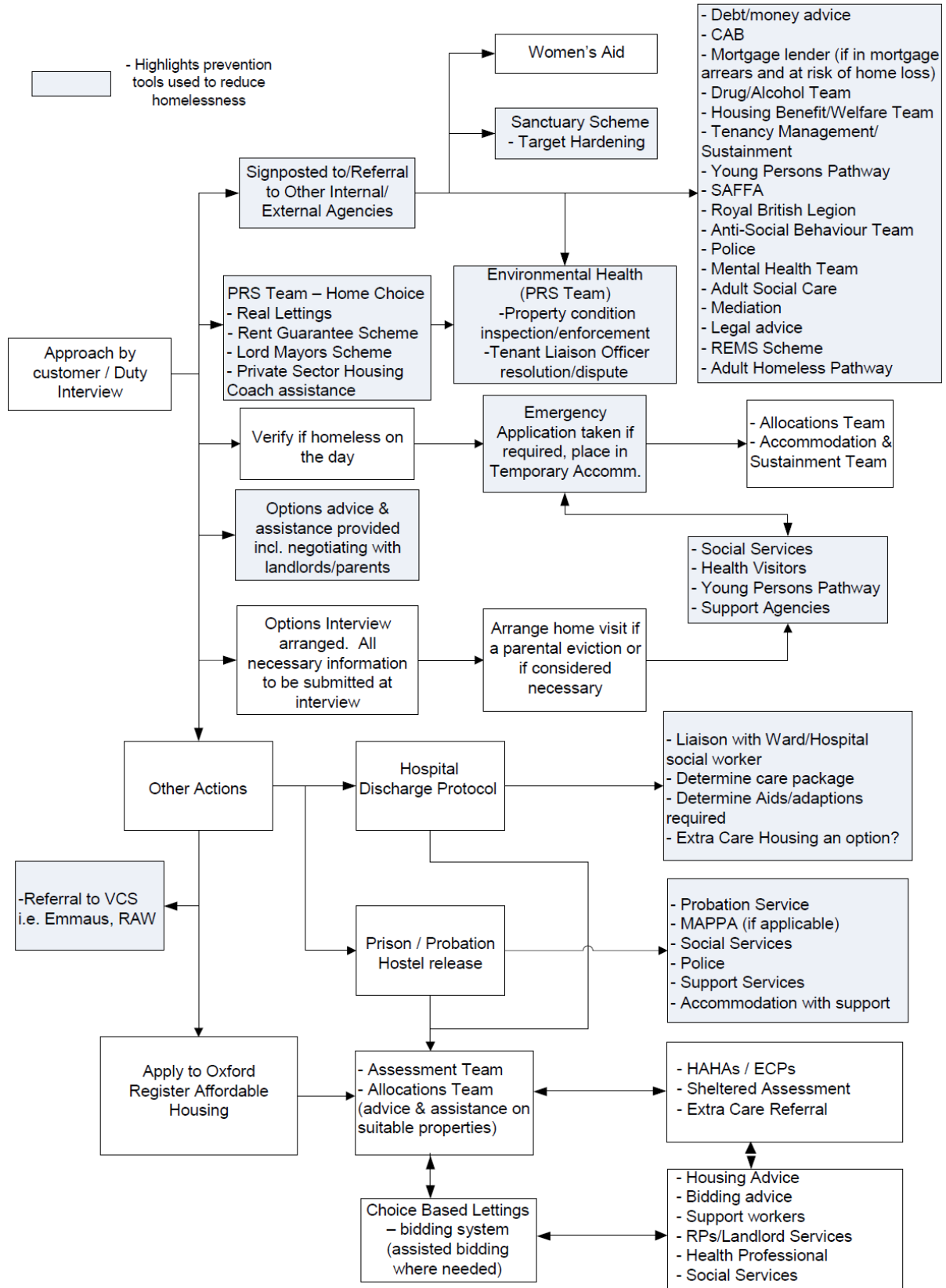
- 5.17 Where a customer is already homeless at the point of approach to the City Council, the Options Team will undertake the necessary housing need assessments and will place the household in suitable temporary accommodation until housing application investigations are complete, as required by legislation. 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.

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- A "public authority" is defined as "a person (other than a local housing authority) who has functions of a public nature."



FIG 5.1

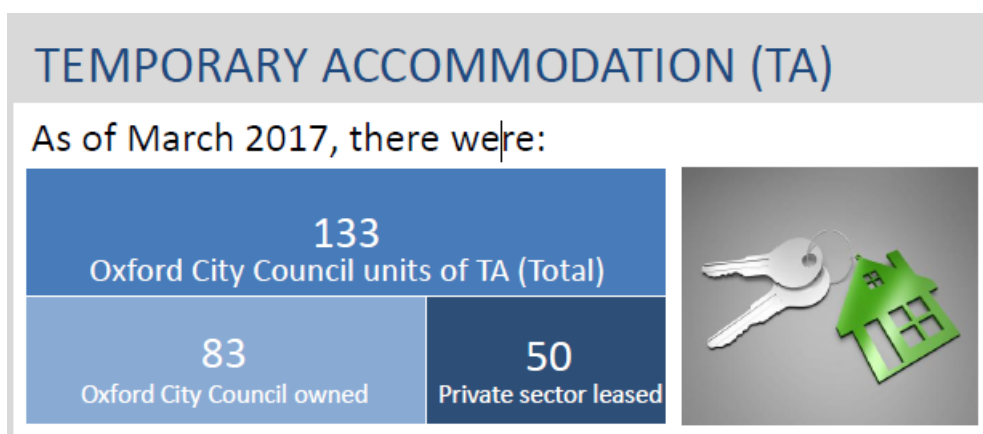
Housing Options & Homelessness Prevention Customer Pathway



- 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.

## 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:



The units include a range of property 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. The length of stay in TA will depend on a number of factors but influenced mainly by the lack of available and suitable family-sized accommodation in the city. 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. The Government has launched a consultation on new statutory guidance for local authorities which is designed to improve how victims of DA in refuges are allocated social housing. Formal guidance is awaited but the City Council will comply with formal guidance published in the future. The future funding of short-term supported accommodation (such as refuge accommodation), is also being considered as part of the Government's consultation paper on 'Funding for Supported Housing' (October 2017).

### **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 secure 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<sup>12</sup>.

### **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 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/05/08/conservatives-pledge-scrap-flawed-mental-health-act>

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.

**5.37 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**

[www.practitionersupport.org](http://www.practitionersupport.org)

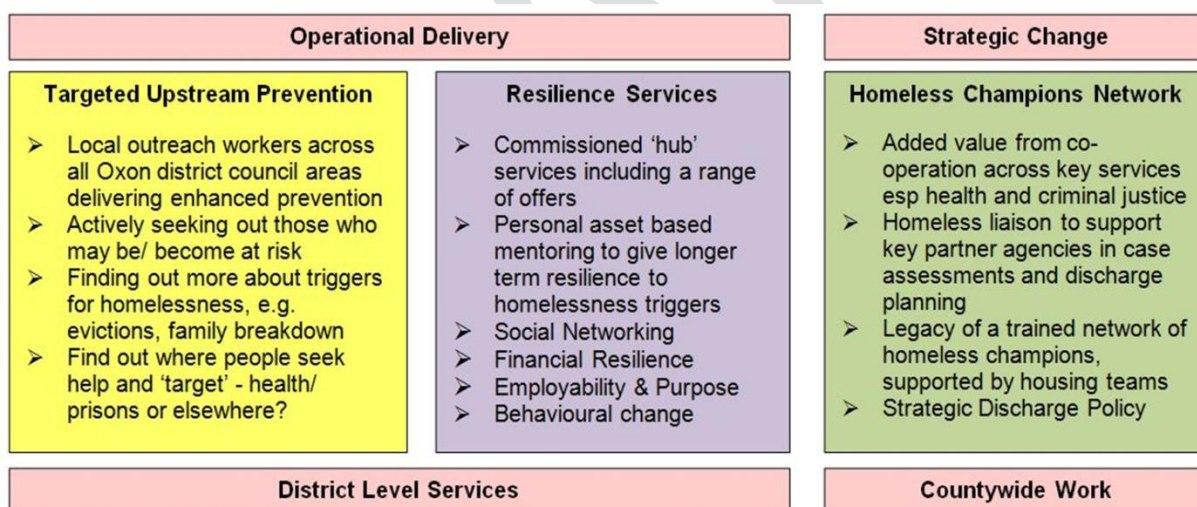
### **Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer**

5.38 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:



- 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**

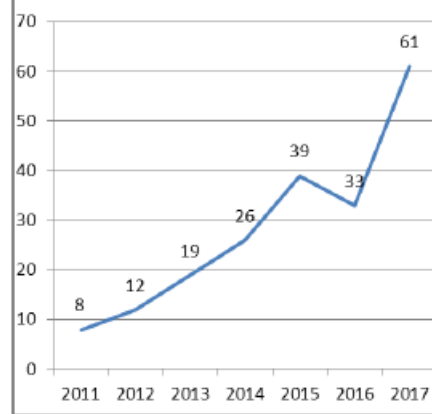
- 5.43 Rough sleeping and the impact of the wider street population have an effect on everybody living in or visiting Oxford City.
- 5.44 People sleeping rough die younger (Homelessness Kills, Crisis 2012), suffer ill-health and are more vulnerable to violence than those in the wider population. The impact of increased numbers of people sleeping rough is also experienced by business, residents and tourists through increased visibility of people begging, street drinking and increased incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- 5.45 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.
- 5.46 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”).*
- 5.47 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**

- 5.48 The City Council’s official street count, using a nationally recognised methodology to count the number of rough sleepers seen bedded down on one specific night, identified that in November 2016 there were 33 rough sleepers, a slight decrease from 39 in November 2015. However, in November 2017, the street count identified 61 rough sleepers. Overall there has been a 400% increase in the number of rough sleepers since 2012. It is recognised that the ‘actual’ number of people sleeping rough on one specific night could be higher due to the potential for ‘hidden’ rough sleepers i.e. those who are rough sleeping but who are not bedded down or are transient at the time of the count.

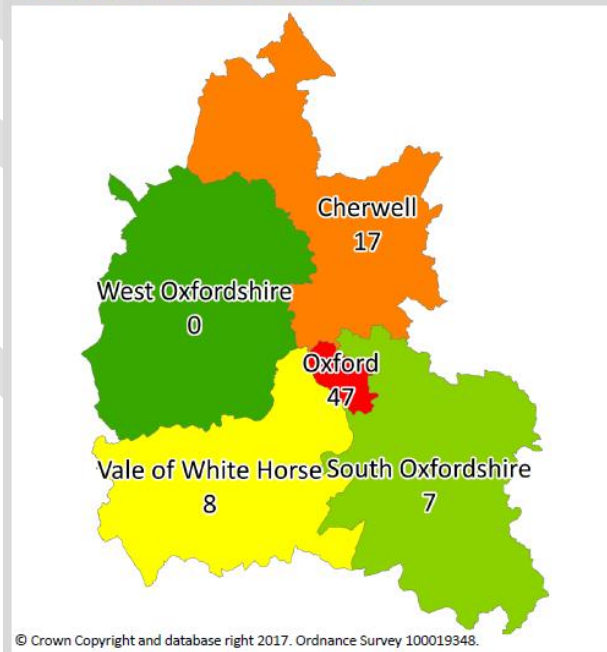
## CITY COUNCIL'S OFFICIAL STREET COUNT

- Street count: Counting the number of rough sleepers seen bedded down on one specific night.
- Overall there has been a **400% increase** in the number of rough sleepers since 2012.

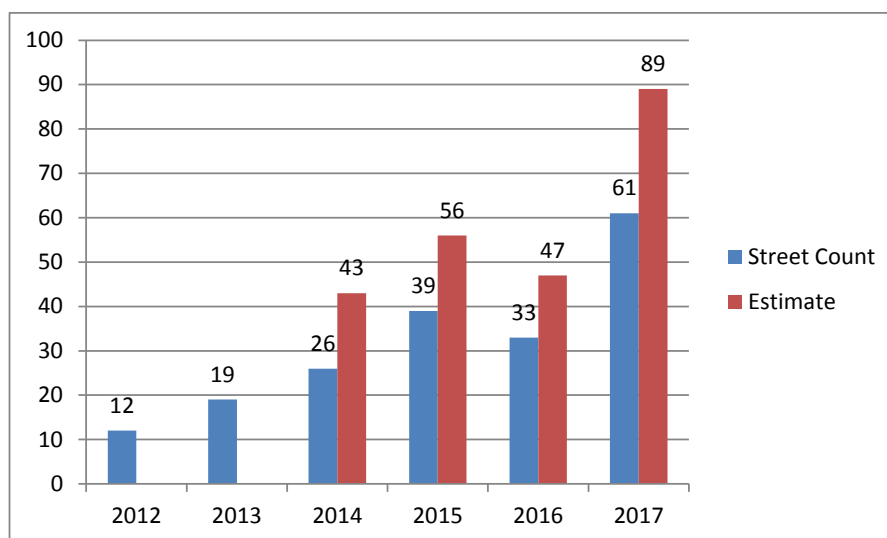


5.49 The City Council also carries out an estimate of rough sleepers which is monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB). Oxford City's estimate of rough sleepers in 2016 was 47, compared to other Oxfordshire Districts. The HWB target was not to exceed the baseline rough sleeping County-wide estimate 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 still a very high number for the County. However, in November 2017 the estimated street count in Oxford City alone was 89 (detailed data for other Districts is awaited).

## OXFORDSHIRE ROUGH SLEEPING ESTIMATES FOR 2016



**Fig 5.2** City Council’s official street count figures compared to the estimate of rough sleepers 2012-2017



### Local connection

- 5.50 Supported accommodation commissioned by the local authority is prioritised for those in need and with a local connection<sup>13</sup> 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 69% of the City’s 2017 street count figure not having an identifiable or known connection to any one of the local authorities in Oxfordshire. 21% of the City’s street count had an identifiable local connection to one of the other district councils in the County. 10% had a local connection to Oxford City. 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

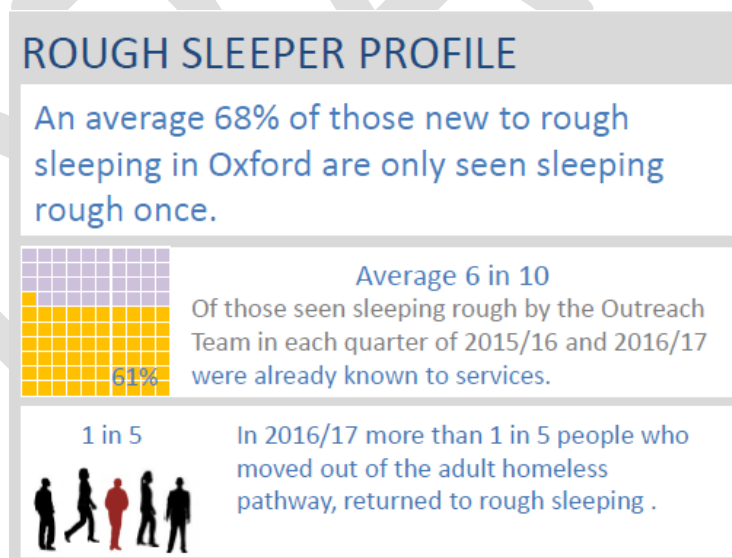
<sup>13</sup> In order for an individual to access supported accommodation for single homeless/rough sleepers in Oxford, they need to have a local connection as set out in the City’s Allocations Scheme or fulfil the criteria for a ‘pathway connection’. A pathway connection is a less strict set of criteria 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).



- 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. FIG 5.3 shows accommodation available for the city as a consequence of these developments. However in September 2017, the City Council resolved to keep Simon House open on a transitional basis to enable A2Dominion, the leaseholder and support provider at Simon House, to build new bespoke supported accommodation in the City. As a result of this decision, the City Council has committed £200,000 in transitional funding to keep 22 beds at Simon House open for rough sleepers with complex needs and a connection to Oxford during 2018/19. The council has agreed to provide a further £1.1 million to enable A2Dominion to provide support services at the new supported housing facility for up to five years. A2Dominion submitted a planning application for the facility in autumn 2017. If successful, the work on site is estimated to commence in spring 2018, and once completed would enable an increase in housing beds available to rough sleepers with a connection to Oxford, beyond the numbers indicated in FIG 5.3.





### Fig 5.3 Homelessness Hostel and Supported Accommodation in Oxford

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

#### Year 1 2017/18 – transition

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

O’Hanlon House – 56 beds Complex/assessment 27 beds – City (7-10 assessment) Remaining beds for other District’s use	O’Hanlon House – 56 beds Complex/assessment 27 beds – City (7-10 assessment) Remaining beds for other District’s use	F u n d e d  b y  p o o l e d  b u d g e t
Simon House – 52 beds Complex/abst./progression Shared provision City/Districts until de-commissioning 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018		
Connection – 31 beds Progression/move-on Shared provision City/Districts, moving to City only 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018	Connection – 31 beds Progression/move-on City	
Mayday Trust – 21 beds Complex/progression/move-on Shared provision, City/Districts, moving to City only 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018	Mayday Trust – 21 beds Complex/progression/move-on City	
Mayday Trust – 10 beds Complex/progression Shared provision, not part of pooled budget from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018		
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>		
Project 41 – 41 beds High/medium and medium/low need City funded until 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	41 beds High/medium and medium/low need	F u n d e d  b y  O C C
Housing First and Acacia – 10 beds City	Housing First and Acacia – 10 beds City	
	Mayday Trust – 10 beds Complex/progression City	
	High/complex need – 20/25 beds To be commissioned to start 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018	

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'. The City Council has committed to increasing the number of Acacia units from 5 to 10 by 2019. 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**.

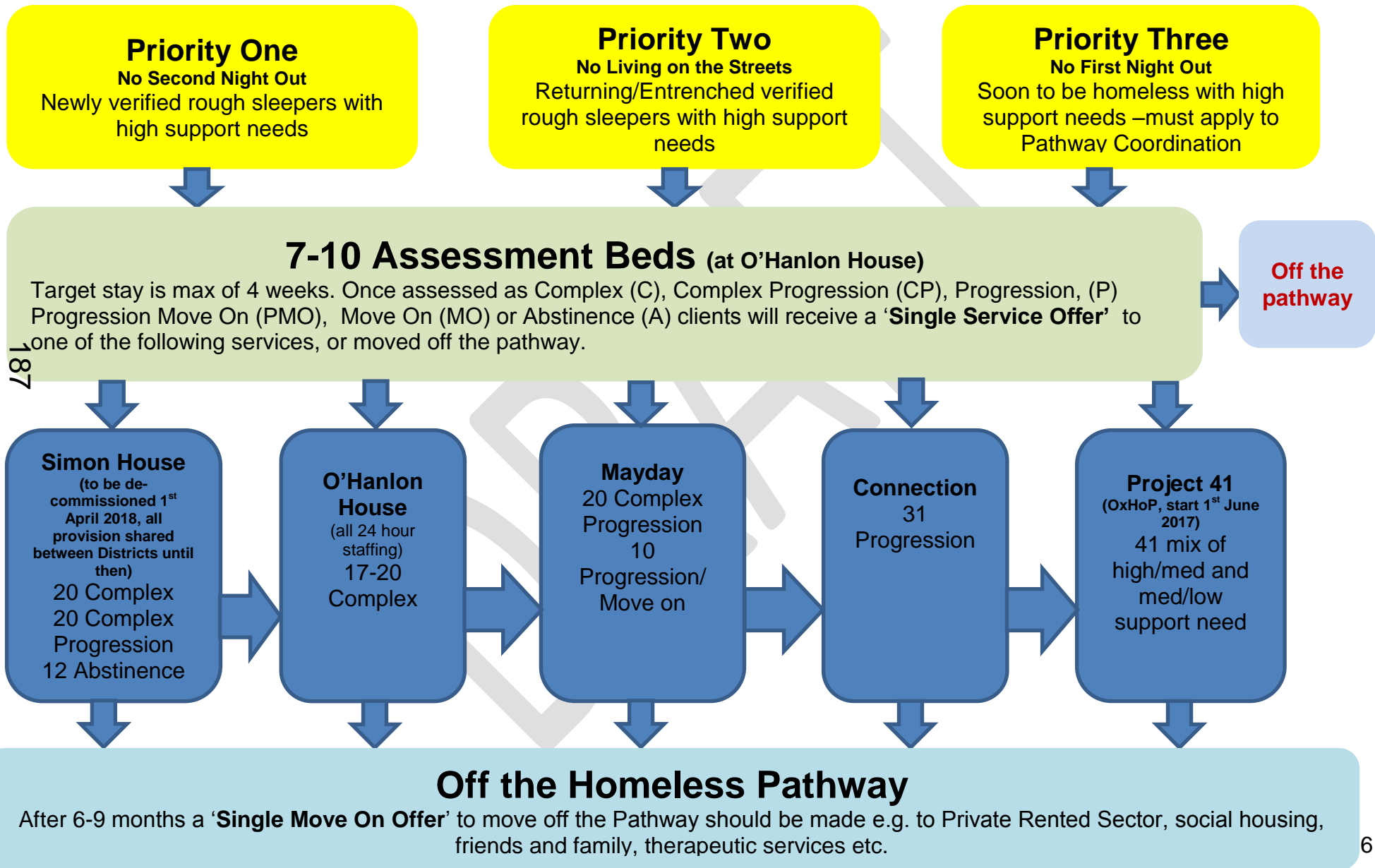
### **Moving On from the Pathway**

- 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)** for clients with a local connection, support needs & recourse to public funds



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## 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 opportunity to work collaboratively and explore opportunities to co-design services and develop work streams (such as establishing a stakeholder/ partnership forum, commissioning and researching, and considering restructured and new initiatives) in order to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping is of great importance. The 'City Conversation' meeting held in November 2017 with stakeholders, voluntary and community sector and people with lived experience of homelessness, started the work towards meeting this objective. 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 The outcome of the Government's consultation on its proposals for funding housing costs for sheltered and Extra Care accommodation, and housing costs for short-term supported accommodation, is awaited. The consultation paper, which was launched in October 2017, suggests the introduction of a Sheltered Rent from 2020 and ring-fenced grant allocations to Local Authorities for short-term supported accommodation. The City Council will need to consider and respond to any related Government Policy or funding changes as they are introduced.
- 5.73 In terms of the current local circumstances and available funding, 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 onwards is a priority for the City Council and will require significant reprioritisation of the Homelessness Prevention Funds to make that happen.
- 5.74 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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. 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**

- 5.75 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.
- 5.76 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.
- 5.77 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**

- 5.78 Whilst the street population is often associated with anti-social behaviour and crime, it is estimated that a significant number 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.
- 5.79 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 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 address anti-social behaviour.



- 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.

5.80 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.

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## 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<sup>14</sup>. 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.

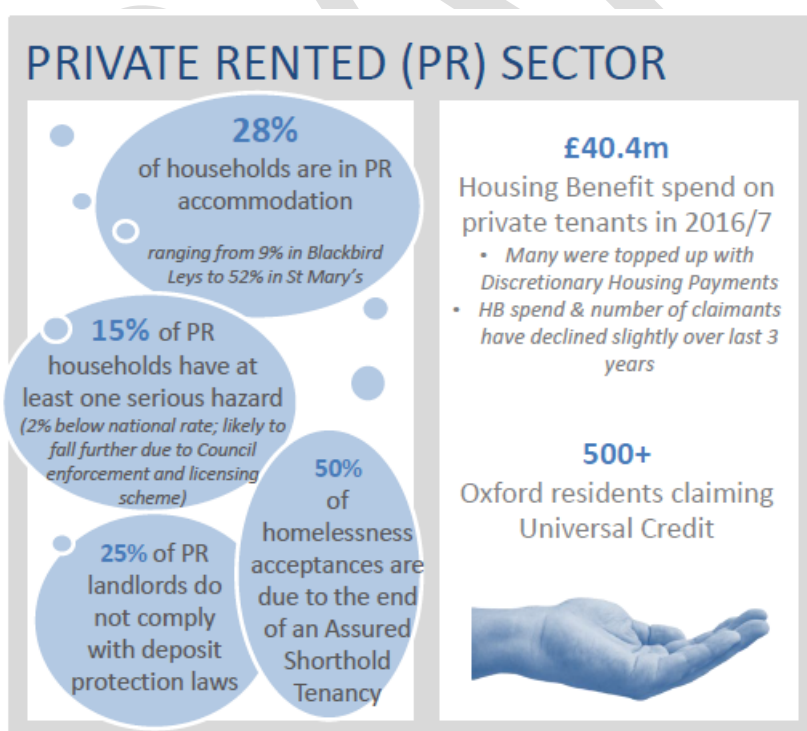
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<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Justice [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

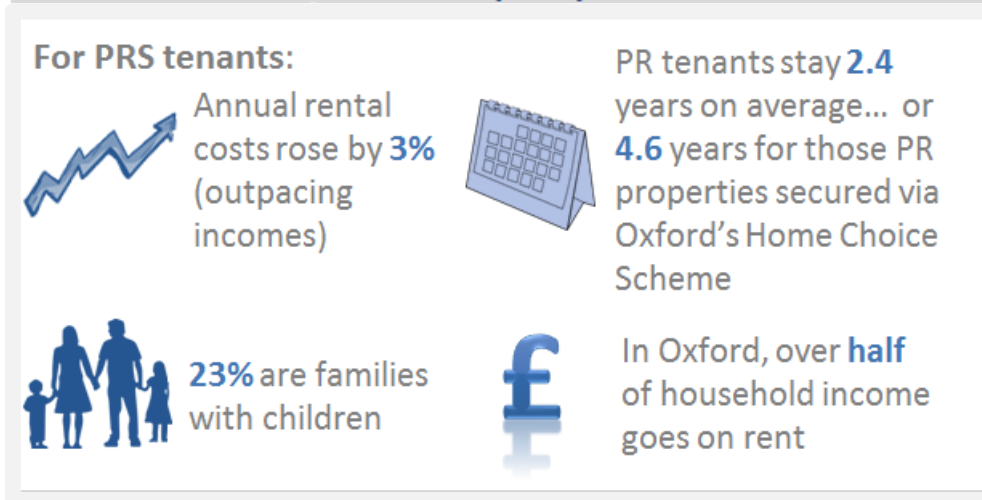
## Working with Private Landlords and challenges of Universal Credit

- 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, the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) to single people under 35, and freezing LHA rates.. 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



## PRIVATE RENTED (PR) SECTOR



- 6.10 Tenants in Oxford were also 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 (PRS). Around two thirds of landlords reported that loss of direct payment of Housing Benefit (HB) 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, which includes financial incentives of two months' rent, 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 the City Council secures lets within the City. However, with gaps between median rent and LHA rates growing wider in Oxford (gaps of between £253 for one bed to £904 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<sup>15</sup> The City Council's website provides more information about what this offer includes:

[www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20114/landlords\\_and\\_agents/1219/rent\\_guarantee\\_service](http://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 the arrangements are 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.

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<sup>15</sup> CEB Report 15/9/16 -

<http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s31744/Report%20-%20Rent%20Guarantees%20Scheme.pdf>

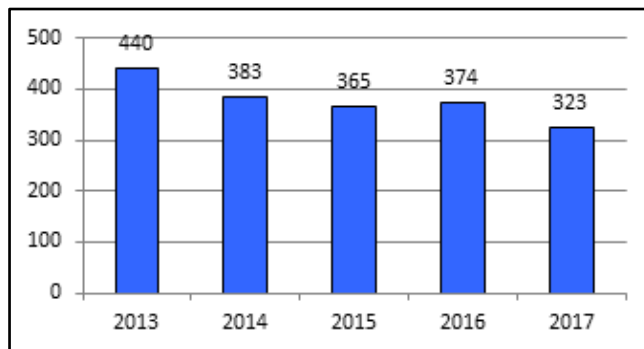
## **Continuing the work to improve access to the PRS for homelessness prevention**

- 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 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 some instances empty properties may be suitable for redevelopment to provide additional homes (subject to planning approval).
- 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 323 in November 2017. This has been achieved principally through provision of advice, information and enforcement action taken by the Empty Property Officer working in partnership and 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.

**Fig 6.1 Number of long term empty homes in Oxford (over 6 Months)**



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. Empty properties may also impact on the locality through unsightliness and associated anti-social behaviour. It is for these reasons that the Council is committed to ensuring empty properties do not remain unoccupied.

6.26 The majority of empty properties in the City are likely to be brought back into use by the owner, however in some cases, there are complex reasons why, without intervention they will not be brought back into use. The Council can use a range of informal and formal actions to facilitate and enable properties to be brought into occupation.

6.27 The Council’s main aim is to work collaboratively with property owners, but where the owner is unwilling or unable to bring the property back into use, the Council has the potential to take formal action 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 more than 6 months, but placing a greater focus on those that have been unoccupied for 2 years or longer.
- properties adversely impacting on the locality and the subject of complaints by members of the Public and other interested parties
- dwellings classed as second homes for Council Tax purposes but which are known to have been unoccupied for more than a year.
- empty commercial buildings (see also paragraph 6.40)



## 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 opportunities to secure Empty Homes Loans (subject to available resources)
- 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.



6.30 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 new 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.

## Formal Action

6.31 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.

## 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 may 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 Where a charge is placed on the Local Land Charges Register following works in default of a notice, and associated costs are incurred under the prescribed legislation, the Council may pursue the charge under the Law of Property Act 1925.
- 6.34 The charge enables the Council to take all necessary legal action to recover these costs through enforcing the sale of the property. Taking this course of action enables the Council to ensure that the property is brought back into use.
- 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:

**Fig 6.2**

Building Act 1984
Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Housing Act 2004, Empty Dwelling Management Orders/Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
Housing Act 1985, Compulsory Purchase Orders
Town and Country Planning Act 1990



Housing and Planning Act 2016
Land Compensation Act 1973, Compulsory Purchase
Law of Property Act 1925, Enforced Sale
Local Gov't and Housing Act 1989
Local Gov't (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
Local Gov't (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
Public Health Acts 1936 and 1961
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

## 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



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.

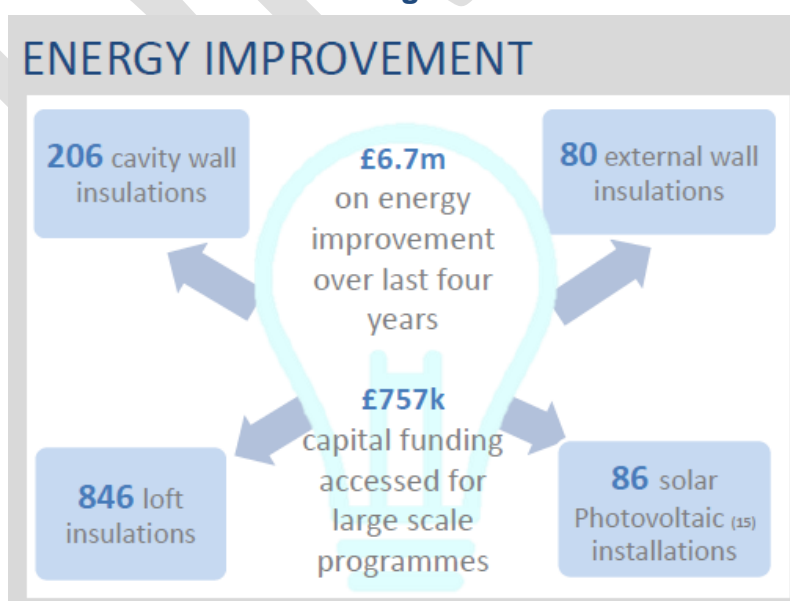
### Improving energy efficiency in housing stock and other properties across Oxford

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



16

<sup>16</sup> Photovoltaic PV - A method of converting energy from the sun to generate electric power.

- 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.

### **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:



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

## 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. More details on the City Council's mandatory and discretionary Housing Assistance Grants can be found in the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy. The costs associated with DFGs, Adaptations and Flexible HIL for 2015-2017 are set out as follows:

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

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 to 2018. Government Guidance on the implementation of the legislative changes is still awaited, however, consideration will need to be given as to the impact of fixed term tenancies in relation to individuals, communities and the City Council as a landlord. 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**

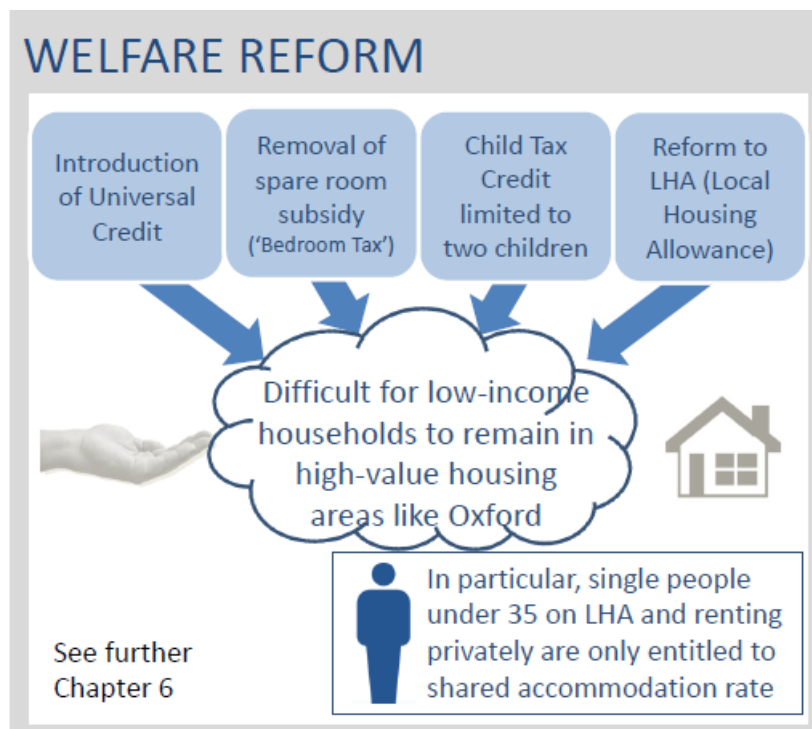
7.35 Managing FTTs will require additional resource to ensure more frequent tenancy reviews are undertaken and any moves (where necessary) are planned and managed carefully. The City Council's Tenancy Management Team would need to work closely with the Housing Options and Allocations Teams to ensure 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 The City Council will operate within legislative requirements and emerging guidance to 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 commenced in October 2017.

7.38



7.39 As mentioned in Chapter 3, the shared accommodation rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) applies to single people under 35 years old (who do not have children living with them) renting accommodation in the private sector. This could result in a shortfall between the LHA rate and the contractual rent.

7.40 Without support, those who are affected most by single accommodation rate LHA, 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 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 provided 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 Management Team is to deal with the day to day management of council tenancies, including: routine tenancy checks; letting empty properties and managing mutual exchanges; tenancy changes; and tenancy breaches. The role of the Tenancy Sustainment Team 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 project<sup>17</sup>, 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.

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<sup>17</sup> NHS England's Healthy New Town Programme:  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/>

- 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.

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## 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 we communicate effectively and 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 its 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.

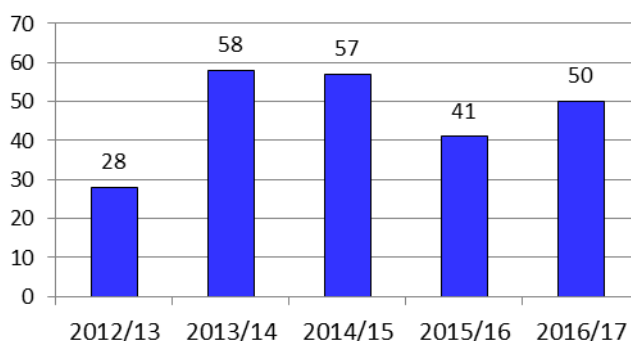
## Supporting our vulnerable tenants to sustain their tenancies

- 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.

## Tackling tenancy fraud and crime in social housing

8.10 The Council's Corporate Fraud Team is committed to reducing fraud that affects the Council and its residents and in particular tenancy fraud. The team conducts proactive operations and intelligence-led investigations to remove people committing fraud in social housing and make properties available for those genuinely in need. All members of the team have powers under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013, which they use regularly to detect and disrupt criminal activity. Between 2014 and 2017 the team recorded over 60 instances of recovered social housing properties and stopped fraudulent applications for housing. Tenancy fraud remains a priority and every allegation received is investigated to protect this limited resource. The Council will seek to prosecute anyone who is found to be illegally subletting their home and where appropriate, will look to recover profits gained from this illegal practice.

## Producing a new Tenancy Strategy 2018-21

8.11 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.



8.12 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 line with legislative requirements. In addition, we will amend the Council’s Tenancy Agreement for Council-owned to reflect changes to the law.

8.13 If 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

8.14 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).

8.15 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

8.16 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**

- 8.17 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.

### **Effective Communication**

- 8.18 The feedback received during the public consultation process for this strategy identified a need for the City Council to communicate housing and homelessness issues clearly and effectively to assist the public's understanding of the work that the City Council and its partners are doing/planning to do to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping now and in the future.
- 8.19 It was also highlighted that there was a need to communicate the roles of the City Council and County Council so that tenants and residents were able to address any concerns to the correct authority. Tenants would also like to receive excellent repairs and maintenance services where work is undertaken within agreed timescales and customers are kept informed.
- 8.20 The City Council will continue to deliver effective communications to City Council tenants and local residents in the form of newspaper releases, Tenants in Touch newsletter, Social Media feeds, face to face contact, in writing, and information on our website. We will continue to work closely with County Council colleagues, Direct Services and other departments within the City Council, and our external partners/stakeholders to identify opportunities to work collaboratively and deliver services and effective communication and training that is clear and understandable to everyone.

## 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.

Funding Amount	Duration	Source	Objective
£181.6 million	2017/18-2020/21	Capital Programme for Housing (General Fund(GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA))	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:
<p><b>HRA</b> (Total of £74m some of which includes the following):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £7m being the balance of Tower Block refurbishment works.</li> <li>• £4.2m Great Estates enhancement of tenant car parking and other infrastructure</li> <li>• £3.3m Barton Regeneration</li> <li>• £3.255m Improvements to doors, windows, controlled entry including the introduction of the Oxford Standard</li> <li>• £21m Replacements of kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, heating and electrics</li> <li>• £5.4m Blackbird Leys regeneration at the heart of the estate</li> <li>• £5.3m adaptations, energy efficiency and empty homes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Loans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £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.</li> </ul>			

<b>Investments</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £4.2m Loan to joint venture with Nuffield College to purchase development land at Oxpens. It is a 50/50 development partnership.</li> <li>• £10m to acquire 39 temporary accommodation units.</li> <li>• £21.2m Barton Park properties</li> <li>• £200,000 Equity Loan Scheme for Teachers (2017/18 – 2018/19)</li> </ul>			
<b>Funding Amount</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Objective</b>
£1.9million (with a potential receipt of £6.2m on approved schemes (Jul 17))	Contributions secured to date 2016/17	Section 106 Financial Contributions Received	Money received goes toward provision of affordable housing
£1,285,214	2017/18 (budget set each year).	Homeless Prevention Fund	Homeless Prevention activities
£4m	2017- 2021	Agreed budget on Medium Term Financial Strategy	Disabled Facilities Grants
£380,000 per year	2017-21	Private Rented Sector	Deposit Guarantee Scheme etc.
£790,000	2017/19	DCLG Homeless Prevention Trailblazer	Trailblazer – Homeless prevention project
£745,000	2016/17	Estate Regeneration Fund (HCA funding programme)	Blackbird Leys - £410,000 Barton - £335,000
£350,000	2016 - 2021	Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (HCA funding programme)	To build 8 older person bungalows on Salford Road and Bracegirdle Road let at social rents
£6,782,000 (rounded)	2017 - 21	New Homes Bonus	The Council uses New Homes Bonus to contribute towards its general fund revenue costs.
£54,859	2016/17 (for 2-year project)	Community-Led Housing Funding from DCLG	To support community-led housing projects in areas where the impact of second homes is particularly acute.
£541,000 £623,000	2017/18 2018/19	DCLG - Flexible Homelessness Support Grant *	To enable local authorities to have more flexibility and control to tackle homelessness assisting those at crisis point
£1,000,000	2018/19	ICT Improvements to Housing Systems	To ensure that the Council's ICT Housing System is updated to accommodate for changes in digital technology and to improve customer access.
£213,732	2017 - 2020	New Burdens Funding from DCLG for 3 years	To mitigate the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requirements.



## 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.

Fund type	Shared amount available	Source	Objective
Homeless Prevention Fund*	£40 million	DCLG	Homeless prevention funding (Other Trailblazer Projects around Rough Sleeping and Social Impact Bonds) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£20 million for local authorities to pilot new initiatives to tackle homelessness in their area</li> <li>£10 million for targeted support for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough or those new to the streets</li> <li>£10 million in Social Impact Bonds to help long-term rough sleepers with the most complex needs</li> </ul>
Accelerated Construction	£1.7billion	HCA Grant funded programme	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.
Housing Infrastructure Fund	£2.3 billion	HCA Grant funded programme	To provide infrastructure to deliver homes in areas of high demand.
Social Infrastructure Funding	£4.5 million	Homeless Link/Access	3-year funding for Charities and Social Enterprises (from June 2017). Offered as an unsecured loan of between £25,000 and £150,000. To <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increase the homelessness sector's knowledge and experience of social investment</li> <li>develop new models for income generation and funding</li> <li>improve their long-term sustainability</li> </ul>
£54 million	Aug 2017 – complete by 2020	Cabinet Office/ DCLG	Councils can bid for funding for land remediation and small-scale infrastructure, to help bring sites forward for housing that would not have otherwise been developed.

(\*) Source - <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-03-15/HCWS538>



## 10. Conclusion and priorities for action

10.1 To achieve the City Council's housing ambition and strategic priorities as highlighted earlier in the Executive Summary, we will undertake the actions set out in each chapter and in the strategy Action Plan (Appendix B). The main strategy priorities and a brief summary of each are set out below:

### **PRIORITY: Increase housing supply and improve access to affordable housing (ref Chapter 4)**

- 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 A focus will be to ensure that the City Council's Local Plan Policies support the delivery of more market and affordable homes to meet a range of specialist (including accessible homes) and general accommodation needs.

10.3 To increase the delivery of homes in Oxford, we will work in partnership with other Oxfordshire Districts, public bodies, Universities, Colleges, Community Housing Groups, Registered Providers and other land/asset owners to secure suitable development opportunities.

10.4 In addition, we will work in partnership to identify and develop opportunities to make better use of existing accommodation by remodelling, extending, or demolishing and re-building. The need for, and opportunity to provide, other models of affordable housing will also be explored e.g. the Community-led housing research project.

### **PRIORITY: Prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people (ref Chapter 5)**

- 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.

10.5 To prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in line with new legislative duties, we will continue to work with existing partnerships and

develop new partnerships with a range of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations to:

- establish a city-wide partnership that works collaboratively to deliver effective, long-term solutions to rough sleeping and homelessness, and the creation of an agreed City-wide framework for Oxford,
- secure support for people to manage finances and sustain their existing accommodation, or to access an alternative,
- provide accommodation and support for those in housing crisis,
- educate and empower people by early intervention to secure settled accommodation which can be sustained now and for the future.

10.6 The City Council also intends to continue 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 in order to improve life for all of Oxford's residents, safeguard those involved from risk of criminal exploitation, and work with and encourage rough sleepers to engage with services.

**PRIORITY: Make best use of private sector accommodation (ref Chapter 6)**

- 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.

10.7 To make best use of private sector accommodation, we will continue to provide advice and guidance to owner occupiers who may be in financial difficulty and at risk of losing their home. In addition, we will assist those who are in, or wish to move into, the private sector by promoting and offering rent deposit and guarantee schemes, a Real Lettings Scheme, and 'tenant ready' opportunities. We also aim to improve the condition of homes in the private sector by working with landlords and actively enforcing property standards, improving energy efficiency, and managing the impact of Houses in Multiple Occupation on neighbourhoods.

10.8 To increase accessibility to properties in the private sector, we will also work with empty property owners to bring the properties back into use, taking informal or formal action as needed.

**PRIORITY: Invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy (ref Chapter 7)**

- 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.

- 10.9 To invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy, we will continue to deliver the planned major refurbishment and Great Estates programmes that are aimed at improving the environment as well as the satisfaction and well-being of local residents within Oxford communities.
- 10.10 In line with legislative guidelines and also through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants and Flexible Home Improvement Loans, we will continue to support and regulate the private sector to secure improved energy efficiency and property conditions (using new powers in the Housing and Planning Act 2016).
- 10.11 Lessons learned from the Barton Healthy New Towns project will help us to identify best practice in delivering such projects and major new developments in the future.
- 10.12 Given the Welfare Reform changes, we will continue to work with customers who may be impacted, in order to build their resilience and reduce the risk of homelessness. In addition, should the mandatory requirement for Council's to introduce fixed term tenancies be formalised with statutory guidance, we will communicate this effectively with customers and monitor the impact of fixed term tenancies on Oxford's communities.

**PRIORITY: Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services (ref Chapter 8)**

- 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.

- 10.13 We will continue to focus on the needs and effective involvement of our tenants, and promote schemes that are available to assist them.
- 10.14 A new Tenancy Strategy will be produced to take into consideration new legislative requirements and the extra administrative burdens and skills sets needed to implement fixed term tenancies once Government guidance has been issued.
- 10.15 In light of legislative changes, we will procure an upgraded computer system for housing services to ensure that Government reporting requirements are met. The new housing system will also provide a facility for customers to make a housing application online (new service). It will also be important to ensure effective communication and that information on our website is updated regularly to assist with early intervention and homelessness prevention.
- 10.16 The overarching principles in working towards achieving the City Council's ambitious vision and strategic aims are that we must:
- Work in partnership with developers, registered providers, universities and the health sector, statutory partners, community and voluntary sectors, businesses, community housing groups 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.
- 10.17 The development of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 has been informed by a review of the previous housing, homelessness and empty property strategies; feedback from stakeholder workshops held in Spring 2017; and includes responses from the 6 week public consultation process in September/October 2017. The strategy also runs in parallel to the work on the City Council's Local Plan 2036.



## **Monitoring the Strategy and Action Plan**

- 10.18 The 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.

**APPENDIX A**

**Evidence Base for the Housing & Homeless Strategy 2018-21**

**Separate document**

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## Appendix B: Proposed Action Plan for the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
<b>Increase housing supply and improve access to affordable housing</b>					
1	Work in partnership with other Oxfordshire Authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other key stakeholders to plan, bid for and secure investment in infrastructure and housing needed to meet Oxfordshire's current and future needs	<b>Interim Assist. Chief Executive - Regeneration &amp; Economy, Head of Planning &amp; Regulatory Services And Head of Housing Services</b>	Co-operation of other Oxfordshire District Authorities, Strategic Housing and Planning Officers	March 2018 to March 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for secure investment</li> <li>• Plan for future infrastructure needs</li> <li>• Plan for future housing need</li> </ul>
2	Work in partnership with Oxfordshire District Councils (DC) to ensure an apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing needs are accommodated within each District as part of the 'duty to cooperate'. This will include agreements (Statement of Common Ground, Framework Agreements or suitable alternative) on dwelling types and tenure, location and accessibility of homes, the development partnering arrangements, lettings and nomination arrangements in relation to housing supplied in each of the following district areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Oxfordshire DC.</li> <li>• Cherwell DC.</li> <li>• Vale of White Horse DC.</li> <li>• South Oxfordshire DC.</li> </ul>	<b>Head of Planning, Sustainable Development &amp; Regulatory Services And Head of Housing Services</b>	Co-operation of other Oxfordshire District Authorities, Strategic Housing and Planning Officers.	March 2018 and ongoing to March 2021 – determined by District Authorities' and Oxford City Council's Local Plan review process and timetable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apportionment agreed in each District in relation to accommodating Oxford's unmet housing need.</li> <li>• Statement of Common Ground agreed in relation to Local Plan reviews undertaken within each District.</li> <li>• Framework or other suitable agreements in place with each District Authority to secure arrangements in relation to dwelling types and tenure, location and accessibility of homes, the development partnering arrangements, lettings and nomination arrangements.</li> </ul>



REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
3	Develop policies within the Local Plan 2036 to ensure they contribute towards meeting a range of housing needs [including: viability testing models of intermediate tenure that are affordable having regard to local incomes and house prices; opportunities to provide housing that meets the needs of staff/sector specific employees (incl. key workers), older people, vulnerable people and people with disabilities, and are energy efficient and accessible].	<b>Head of Planning, Sustainable Development &amp; Regulatory Services</b>	Housing Team, Housing Development Team, Planning Team, Finance/Procurement Teams. Consultation process requires input from public and stakeholders.	March 2018 and ongoing to March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, modelling and viability testing completed to inform the development of Local Plan policies around affordable housing types and type/affordability of intermediate housing, staff accommodation, and housing to meet a range of needs. Preference to be social rent tenure.</li> <li>• Consultation undertaken on draft policies.</li> <li>• New Policies included in the Local Plan 2036 submission to SoS.</li> </ul>
4	Secure more affordable housing through the Council's Housing Company and our partner Registered Providers.  Deliver the next phases of Council housing new build programme (years 1 and 2) and plan future phases (years 3 to 5).	<b>Head of Housing Services</b>	Housing Development Manager, Registered Providers, Planning and Property Officers	March 2019 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 39 rented homes developed in 2017/18 – total of 68 affordable homes built in year.</li> <li>• 92 rented homes developed in 2018/19 a total of 102 affordable homes built in year (including first 45 completions at Barton Park)</li> <li>• Housing Company dev't programme approved and on-site (inc exploration of affordable housing on small sites) to deliver the next phases of the affordable new build programme (years 1 and 2) and future phases (years 3 to 5) delivering and average of 120 units p.a. or more</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
5	Secure appropriate affordable housing mix on the regeneration sites at Oxpens and Northern Gateway	<b>Head of Housing Services And Head of Planning, Sustainable Development &amp; Regulatory Services</b>	Planning and Housing Officers	March 2019 and ongoing	Affordable housing mix agreed and secured through the planning process.
6	Work with Registered Provider's and other public bodies/land owners 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.	<b>Head of Housing Services</b>	Housing Development Manager, Registered Providers, Planning, Housing and Property Teams, Public Bodies and land owners e.g. Universities, Colleges etc.	By December 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites identified for consideration</li> <li>• Viable redevelopment proposals and housing options identified (inc. exploration of re provision of hostel accommodation; potential for shared or Co-housing; provision of affordable intermediate tenure homes [incl. potential opportunities to secure affordable home ownership for people with a local connection to the city]; and provision of specialist housing to meet specific needs.)</li> </ul>
7	Complete the Community-led Housing Fund commissioned project research and identify opportunities to deliver Community-Led Housing in the City.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Specialist expertise commissioned plus input from Housing and Planning Teams	By December 2018	Project tasks completed in line with project specification. Online toolkit made available to the public.
8	Evaluate the impact of the Teachers Equity Loan Scheme.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing, Development and Finance Teams, Catalyst Housing, Schools/Teachers	By March 2019	Evaluation completed and 'lessons learned' used to inform future initiatives.

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
9	Continue to work in partnership with Universities, public bodies, Registered Providers, Developers and the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) to progress opportunities to make best use of assets (land, buildings etc.) and build more housing in the City to meet a range of housing needs (incl. affordable housing and provision of appropriate levels of key staff and student accommodation) in suitable locations.	<b>Interim Assist. Chief Executive - Regeneration &amp; Economy, Head of Planning, Sustainable Development &amp; Regulatory Services, And Head of Housing Services</b>	Housing Development and Regeneration Teams, Planning and Housing Officers in partnership with land owners, public bodies, Universities.	March 2019 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More homes, particularly affordable homes, secured and/or completed on land or assets owned by the City Council and/or the Universities, Registered Providers, County Council and other public bodies etc.</li> <li>• Appropriate levels of student accommodation provided in City locations that ease the pressure on the availability of housing in the private rented sector (subject to planning requirements being met).</li> </ul>
10	Implement further recommendations from the Older Persons Housing Review	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing and Planning Teams, Health, County Council and Registered Provider/ Development partners.	By March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update market Position Statement in place from the County Council.</li> <li>• City Council's Allocations Scheme updated to reflect recommendations within the review document.</li> <li>• Housing need established for additional specialist housing (incl. Extra Care)</li> <li>• Opportunities identified for new development to meet identified needs, re-development or remodelling of accommodation designated for older persons.</li> </ul>
11	In line with legislative requirements and issued guidance, undertake a review and assessment of housing needs for people needing to live on houseboats or requiring accommodation moorings.	<b>Head of Planning, and Head of Housing Services</b>	Planning and Housing Teams, Procurement/ Finance Teams. Environmental Health Team	March 2018 onwards (time determined by issue of DCLG guidance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission specialist services to undertake a review and needs assessment.</li> <li>• Report published to be used to inform policy development.</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
<b>Prevent homelessness and meet the needs of vulnerable people</b>					
12	Review the combined Housing and Homelessness Strategy (incorporating Empty Property Strategy) 2018-21 in line with current legislation and budgets. Update the Action Plan in consultation with stakeholders.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing and Planning teams, stakeholders.	By August 2019	Strategy Reviewed and new Action Plan published.
13	Further develop housing and homelessness prevention services to assist implementation of requirements set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and emerging legislation and guidance. (Including attracting 'new burdens funding' where appropriate)	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Legislation being passed Housing Needs Teams in partnership with advice and support agencies, Welfare Reform Team, Trailblazer Project Team.	By August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practice researched to establish what works well.</li> <li>• Legislation &amp; guidance used to inform revised processes and procedures.</li> <li>• Training completed.</li> <li>• A communications plan regarding changes has been developed and implemented – rolled out to service providers, customers and partner agencies.</li> <li>• Homelessness Services operating within new processes and procedures – developed in liaison with other Local Authorities in the District to ensure consistency of approach and best practice.</li> <li>• New burdens money secured where appropriate.</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
14	<p>Lead on the delivery of the Oxfordshire Trailblazer project that focuses on homelessness prevention. (Funding in place £790k). Project initiatives being implemented from</p> <p>Sept 17, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted prevention outreach work – baseline work and delivery</li> <li>• Resilience services – gaps analysis and delivery</li> </ul> <p>Homeless Champions network – inc stakeholder mapping; identification of champions; development and delivery of training; network co-ordination; hospital discharge protocols; prison discharge work and probation liaison to be put in place.</p>	<p><b>Housing Management Team / Trailblazer Project Manager</b></p>	<p>Trailblazer Project Team (recruited July 2017), City Council and Oxfordshire District Councils Housing Teams, partner agencies include: Health teams, Probation Service, Children’s Trust Board, housing related support providers, voluntary and community sector organisations across Oxfordshire, and a local GP practice.</p>	<p>From September 2017. Ongoing (2 year project ending Sept 2019).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and evaluate project initiatives rolled out from September 2017. Produce reports and identify lessons learned to share as best practice.</li> <li>• Review each new initiative 6 months from implementation (unless the project is more short-term).</li> <li>• Improved and agreed protocols in place - Prison discharge protocol and hospital discharge protocol in particular to be reviewed with stakeholders by September 2018.</li> <li>• Continuous training programme established with feedback from partner organisations demonstrating an improved understanding of homelessness issues and the duty to refer to the local authority. By March 2018 onwards.</li> <li>• Review the established data collection systems and information sharing agreements in place to ensure continued relevance and opportunities for improvement. Review before July 2018.</li> <li>• Identify effective and sustainable initiatives that could be supported longer-term. Support production of necessary reports and business case.</li> <li>• Liaison with Crisis, Shelter and other organisations to establish best practice in this field of work.</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
15	Complete any new Gold Standard Challenges set within the life of this strategy – continuing to deliver housing, homelessness and homelessness prevention services to the national Gold Standard.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	City Council Housing Team, National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) – administrator of the national standard.	By March 2021 or other timescale prescribed by NPSS)	Any new challenges set are completed within the life of this strategy (or timescale prescribed by the NPSS)
16	Ensure sufficient provision of suitable Temporary Accommodation (TA), at best value to the Council by completing the acquisition of 39 (total) temporary accommodation units (subject to availability of local suitable accommodation on the open market and within available budgets) and minimising the number of households requiring TA.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Oxford City Council's Property, Finance, Legal and Housing Teams	March 2019 and on-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties procured in accordance with the City Executive Board approval and approved funding arrangements.</li> <li>• Households in TA not exceeding 120.</li> <li>• No families in B&amp;B accommodation for more than 6 weeks.</li> </ul>
238 17	Continue working within a multi-agency approach to reduce rough sleeping and homelessness: Ensure provision of a proactive and collaborative 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.	<b>External Agencies &amp; City Council Housing Team</b>	Statutory and non-statutory partner agencies, voluntary and community sector organisations, City Council Housing Team etc.	To March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people sleeping rough in the City is minimised or reduced 10% from 2016/17 levels.</li> <li>• Research completed in partnership with other agencies and recommendations made on the feasible short-term and long-term options to provide accommodation and/or support to homeless rough sleepers in the City who have no local connection to the City or anywhere else, and no recourse to public funds. Exploration to include best practice solutions and any conditional requirements such as employment support.</li> </ul>



REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
17	Continued....				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with external agencies to explore local connection issues and establish consistency of approach to applying local connection, as per legal requirements and as agreed as part of homelessness pathway arrangements – communicate this to service users.</li> </ul>
18	Work in partnership with statutory and non-statutory partner agencies to establish the type and model of accommodation (and related support) would provide for the needs of younger people in general but specifically those leaving care and who are transitioning to independence but have more complex needs or higher support needs.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Team working in partnership with County Council, Children's Services, Social Care, Health, Registered Providers, specialist support providers and safeguarding boards.	By March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Statutory Agencies to establish level of need over 3-5 years and gaps in current service provision.</li> <li>Identify best practice and suitable models of housing and support to be provided.</li> <li>Secure agreement on way forward e.g. how to fill gaps in service provision and provide suitable accommodation models as required.</li> </ul>
19	Improve access to suitable accommodation and support where a particular need is identified (e.g. treatment based, long term care, disability adapted). Improve relationship between housing and homelessness services and other support agencies (e.g. mental health and social services) Identify joint opportunities to secure appropriate accommodation and support to meet a range of needs including: learning disabilities, autism, dementia, and other specialist need provision.	<b>Partner Agency &amp; Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Team, Statutory and non-statutory partner agencies (incl. Mental Health Commissioners), voluntary and community sector organisations etc.	March 2019 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify gaps in supply of accommodation and services, including specialist need accommodation.</li> <li>Agreement reached with MH services and other statutory agencies in respect of capacity to provide the necessary support and transition services to fill the identified gaps OR commissioning of those services if needed.</li> <li>If not already provided, provide or develop suitable accommodation to meet identified needs.</li> <li>Reduced evictions from supported housing, through partnership working.</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
20	<p>Creating a better environment for stakeholder involvement &amp; improve working relations with various stakeholders around rough sleeping/homelessness prevention, including: university, colleges, churches, students. Work with these stakeholders and people with lived experience of homelessness, to adapt a City response to homelessness and rough sleeping and develop new partnership approach to prevent and tackle rough sleeping.</p>	<p><b>External Partner Agencies and Housing Management Team</b></p>	<p>Statutory and non-statutory agencies, universities, churches, voluntary and community sector organisations and Housing Teams.</p>	<p>January 2018 and ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a 'City Conversation' (by Dec 2017) and include best practice from Manchester and/or other leading authorities.</li> <li>• Broader stakeholder network established where the City Council is an equal partner to other participants.</li> <li>• Regular stakeholder involvement meetings held and framework arrangements agreed.</li> <li>• Co-designed work streams in place to deliver improved collective approach to rough sleeping.</li> <li>• New approaches/projects in place that are co-designed and delivered.</li> <li>• Adequate accommodation secured for severe weather provision</li> </ul>
21	<p>Through its own commissioning arrangements, the City Council to fund supported accommodation for rough sleepers and single homeless to mitigate the impact of County Council cuts to support services and supported accommodation in the City.</p>	<p><b>Housing Management Team</b></p>	<p>City Council Housing, Property and Legal Teams in partnership with County Council and support providers.</p>	<p>By April 2018 and ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocated budgets assigned to procure the additional beds and support services needed.</li> <li>• Commission suitable arrangements for the re-provision of beds from Simon House from April 2019.</li> <li>• Double the number for Acacia units from 5 to 10 by January 2020.</li> <li>• Units procured/support contracts tendered.</li> <li>• Implementation of schemes with evaluation to follow.</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
22	Make a safer city for everyone through partnership working arrangements that are focussed on effective solutions and sustainable moves for individuals away from the streets.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	City Council Housing Team in partnership with: County Council, Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team (ASBIT), Police, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, Outreach Team, and other support providers.	By March 2019 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership arrangements in place</li> <li>Effective solutions identified and related work streams mapped out to implement solutions.</li> <li>Awareness raised with all partners in respect of the solutions-based approach and who is involved in delivery.</li> </ul>
23	Work with partners and stakeholders to develop alternative giving schemes and promote this across the City and to residents and visitors alike.	<b>Partner Agency</b>	City Council Housing Team in partnership with: Voluntary and Community Sector organisation and support providers.	By October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Alternative Giving' scheme(s) explored and developed, in place, and promoted widely in accordance with an agreed stakeholder communications plan.</li> <li>Evaluation of the scheme to follow 12 months from launch.</li> </ul>
24	Increase Young People's awareness of housing issues by: Establishing Homeless Prevention work into curriculum at Oxford Spire Academy and Oxford Academy for 15/16 year olds. Use of innovative approaches with Youth Ambition Officers to develop suitable communications to young people e.g. DVD or YouTube clip/Social media etc.)	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Teams, Youth Ambition Team in partnership with young people, Schools and Academy's in Oxford.	March 2018 and roll out ongoing to 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitable message prepared in a relevant format as agreed with the Youth Ambition and participating young people.</li> <li>Message presented to all identified Schools in Oxford.</li> <li>Rolling programme undertaken to capture new Year Groups.</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
<b>Make best use of Private Sector accommodation</b>					
25	Undertake proactive annual campaigns to promote the help that is available to home owners should they become at risk of mortgage repossession.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Teams in partnership with Court Desk Service, Debt and Money Advice agencies, Revenues Teams	Annually to March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of actual Mortgage Repossessions in Oxford reduced or 0</li> <li>Annual publicity campaign completed (to include website update, press and social media releases, publicity materials produced, communications plan etc.).</li> <li>Updated briefings/training provided to City Council Staff who are first contact for home owners.</li> <li>Liaison with Court Desk services on the campaign and what help is available.</li> </ul>
26	Evaluate the Real Lettings project and 'lessons learned'. Establish if the scheme has presented value for money and if there is a case for further investment.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing team in partnership with partner agencies and Welfare Reform Team, Finance Team	By January 2019	Evaluation undertaken and 'lessons learned' have been explored.
27	Evaluate the Rent Guarantee scheme & 'lessons learned'. Establish if the scheme has presented value for money and if there is a case for further investment.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing team	By December 2018	Scheme implemented and evaluation report produced, with metrics against targets in the initial Project Plan.
28	Evaluate second year of the Home Choice Client coaching approach launched in 2016/17 in conjunction with the Rent Guarantee model.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing team in partnership with Welfare Reform Tm, local letting agents.	By December 2018	Scheme implemented and evaluation report produced, with metrics against targets in the initial Project Plan.

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
29	Campaign to Landlords/ private property owners to raise awareness of the PRS offers available from the City Council should they wish to let their property privately as an alternative housing option to for people who are unable to secure home ownership or a social rented home.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Team, in partnership with Empty Property Officer, Environmental Health Team and advice agencies.	Annually from 2018 - 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual publicity campaign completed (to include links with Landlord Accreditation Scheme, Landlord Forum and empty property owners, website updates, press and social media releases, publicity materials produced, communications plan etc.).</li> <li>Updated briefings/training provided to City Council Staff who are first contact for home owners.</li> <li>Increased number of PRS homes available to let.</li> </ul>
30	City Council to 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.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing team in partnership with Welfare Reform Team, local letting agents.	By March 2020	Data monitored and impact of changes established. Report written –publicity to be decided.
31	Continue works outlined in the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016-19 in relation to licensing of HMO's, improving property standards and energy efficiency, Tenancy Relations Officer work, and supporting the work to bring empty properties back into use.	<b>Environmental Health Service</b>	Environmental Health, Legal, Housing and Planning Services.	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver actions outlined in the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016-19 Action Plan.</li> <li>Review the strategy in line with continuing needs for services.</li> </ul>
32	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 per annum back into use.	<b>Empty Property Officer</b>	Housing, Legal, Environ. Health and Revenues Teams. Action will require input of public and participation of empty dwelling owners, executors of estate.	March 2018 and annually to 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% target reached and/or exceeded.</li> <li>Focussed action taken to bring longer term empty dwellings back into use.</li> <li>Take up of Empty Homes Loans where appropriate.</li> <li>Undertake market research to explore best practice and establish what could work as incentive for owners</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
33	The Council will 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 into use.	<b>Empty Property Officer</b>	Housing, Legal, Environmental Health and Revenues Teams. Action will require input and participation of empty commercial property owners and public.	March 2018 ongoing to 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of under-used commercial buildings that have potential for use as residential accommodation has been identified.</li> <li>Owners contacted and discussions completed to establish future use of the buildings.</li> <li>Processes and procedures put in place to take informal or formal action to bring the properties back into use.</li> </ul>
<b>Invest to create sustainable communities that are safe and healthy</b>					
34	Deliver the planned major refurbishment and estate regeneration projects in line with the allocated budget and to improve the satisfaction of residents living in Oxford communities	<b>Head of Housing Services And Interim Assist. Chief Exec. (Regeneration and Economy)</b>	Housing Development and Regeneration Teams, Planning, Housing and Property Teams, external partners such as Health and County Council.	By March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified individual work streams are completed in line with agreed project timescales. (Inc. Blackbird Leys and Barton Regeneration projects)</li> <li>Resident satisfaction has increased.</li> <li>A review of the 'lessons learned' from the projects has been undertaken; best practice has been identified; and lessons shared to inform future initiatives.</li> </ul>
35	Consider best approach to take to increasing intervention and regulation of private rented sector properties to secure improved property conditions (using new powers in the Housing & Planning Act 2016)	<b>Environmental Health Service</b>	Environmental Health, Legal and Planning Services.	September 2018 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision agreed and a report approved (where needed for approval).</li> <li>Targets agreed and resources in place</li> </ul>



REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
36	Promote energy efficiency across all tenures to ensure they meet the EPC level E or above by April 2018 onwards and agree the most appropriate enforcement approach	<b>Environmental Sustainability Service</b>	Housing & Tenancy Management Teams, property owners, private landlords, Registered Providers. Input required from tenants and residents of the City to allow works to be undertaken. Joint working with Homes Multiple Occupation Enforcement and Private Sector Safety Teams in EH on enforcement against sub-standard props.	By April 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of activities completed.</li> <li>• Enforcement approach agreed.</li> </ul>
37	Prioritise energy efficiency of properties to increase tenant resilience to fuel poverty (meeting decent homes targets and energy efficiency requirements through cost effective refurbishments)	<b>Property Services Management Team</b>	Property Services, Private Sector, Direct Services, Planning, Finance Regeneration and Tenancy Management Teams. Customer co-operation in relation implementation.	By March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties identified.</li> <li>• Planned works programmed.</li> <li>• Work underway.</li> <li>• Resident satisfaction with property improved.</li> </ul>
38	Complete Barton Healthy New Town project and undertake lessons learned & share as best practice to inform future sustainable developments.	<b>Communities Team</b>	Community Services Team, Housing and Property Teams in partnership with Health and other stakeholders	Date to be confirmed – in line with the agreed project plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barton Healthy Newtown project completed March 2018.</li> <li>• Project evaluation completed May 2018</li> <li>• 'Lessons learned' and best practice report shared June 2018</li> </ul>

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
39	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	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Team, Welfare Reform Team, Tenancy Management, Income and Finance Teams in partnership with advice agencies and Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)	January 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear processes in place in terms of information sharing across teams/services.</li> <li>• Impact of continuing changes understood and communicated.</li> <li>• Customers and stakeholders informed.</li> </ul>
<b>Be an effective landlord and deliver quality services</b>					
40	To continue the tenant-led approach to delivering the Council's Landlord Service, we plan to recruit, provide training and further develop 'Tenant Specialists'	<b>Tenancy Management Team</b>	Tenancy Management Team	March 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will take a lead on identifying opportunities and improvements on specific service areas</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• For the Tenant Specialists to be involved in monitoring activities</li> </ul>
41	Achieving TPAS reaccreditation for a further three years 2018-2021.	<b>Tenancy Management Team</b>	Tenancy Management Team	March 2018 and ongoing	Continue and expand the work of the Tenant Involvement Team to achieve TPAS re-accreditation.

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
42	Build on the principles of 'tenant involvement' to ensure that opportunities to develop our tenant-led approach become more inclusive and flexible.	<b>Tenancy Management Team</b>	Tenancy Management Team, Council Tenants	March 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual involvement through social media, online services, text and email.</li> <li>Introduction of an online training option.</li> <li>Filming, editing and online posting of our Tenants Tours.</li> </ul>
43	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).	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Team	March 2018 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of under-occupying households reduced as a result of the scheme.</li> </ul>
44	Develop a new Tenancy Strategy & Policy Statement in line with legislation	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing Team in partnership with Legal and Tenancy Management Teams, Registered Providers and Stakeholders.	March 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation with Stakeholders, Agencies, Council Tenants and public completed.</li> <li>New Strategy adopted.</li> <li>Strategy implementation is monitored and reviewed annually.</li> </ul>
45	Develop a revised Tenancy Agreement and new tenancy type of 'Fixed Term Tenancies' for Council-owned homes to ensure legislative requirements are met. Implement the Tenancy Agreement and the Fixed Term Tenancies and monitor their impact.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing, Tenancy Management, and Legal Teams with input required from Stakeholders, Registered Providers, tenants and public.	By March 2018 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenancy Agreement in place.</li> <li>Tenancy Strategy in place and includes arrangements for Fixed Term Tenancies.</li> <li>Clear communications plan implemented to ensure tenants and relevant parties such as advice agencies new housing applicants etc. are informed of the changes and how to get help. Choice Based lettings advertisements to include tenure details for all Council properties.</li> </ul>
46	Further develop landlord services to align processes, procedures and working arrangements to accommodate the additional requirements introduced by the implementation of Fixed Term Tenancies and a revised tenancy agreement.	<b>Tenancy Management Team</b>	Tenancy Management Team	By March 2018 and ongoing	Processes and procedures agreed and in place within Tenancy Management Teams and customers are informed.

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
47	Monitor impact of Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT) on sustainability of communities. Align the Allocations Scheme as needed to address issue of priority where a planned move is required at the end of FTT.	<b>Housing Management Team</b>	Housing, Tenancy Management and Legal Services. Monitoring may require input from tenants.	March 2019 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of FTT's monitored and evaluated (including impact on customers)</li> <li>Allocation Scheme amended to reflect any need for priority banding as a FTT comes to an end. Date to be decided.</li> </ul>
48	Deliver an enhanced housing investment programme for the Council's own stock in relation to the planned tower block refurbishments.	<b>Property Services Management Team</b>	Property Services, Direct Services, Planning, Finance Regeneration and Tenancy Management Teams. External service providers.	By March 2021	Key milestones identified within the Project Management Plan are on track and being achieved.
249	Deliver an enhanced housing investment programme for the Council's own stock in relation to the Great Estates programme.	<b>Property Services Management Team</b>	Property Services, Direct Services, Planning, Finance Regeneration and Tenancy Management Teams. External service providers.	By March 2021	Key milestones identified within the Project Management Plan are on track and being achieved.

REF	Objectives	Owner	Required input from	Timeline	Measures of Success
50	<p>Procure and implement a new/improved ICT housing system.</p> <p>Incorporating facilities to: improve recording of customer intelligence; make online housing applications; record data in line with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) data recording requirements in relation to housing delivery, homelessness prevention, relief and duty services.</p> <p>Ensure that information on our website is updated regularly to assist with early intervention and homelessness prevention.</p>	<p><b>Head of Housing Services</b></p> <p><b>And</b></p> <p><b>Head of Business Improvement</b></p>	<p>ICT Support, Housing, Finance &amp; Procurement, Legal Teams. Roll out of the project will require input and support from supported housing providers, RPs, Voluntary &amp; Community Sector organisations, Advice Agencies, Council Tenants etc.</p>	<p>March 2018 and ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active contribution made by H&amp; P officers to the pre-procurement process and tendering arrangements to procure the new system.</li> <li>• System procured and active contributions made by H&amp;P staff to the development and testing of the product. Implementation in 2019.</li> <li>• Information on our website is updated</li> </ul>
249 <sup>51</sup>	<p>Implement changes to Allocations Policy to take into account letting and management of the stock developed by the Council's Housing Company (implementation by completion of the first Housing Company dwelling) and recommendations within the Review of Older Person's Housing (75+ eligibility) etc.</p>	<p><b>Housing Management Team</b></p>	<p>Housing and Tenancy Management Teams</p>	<p>January 2018 and ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Company Policies in place.</li> <li>• Allocations Policy amended to reflect any necessary changes required.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C – National and Oxfordshire Context

### NATIONAL CONTEXT

The issues of rising house prices, housing supply and the increasing demand for suitable and affordable accommodation continue to remain a national problem. In writing this strategy, Oxford City Council has had particular regard to legislation and associated draft guidance, as well as national and local policies.

#### Impact of the Housing White Paper (Fixing our broken housing market)

The Government introduced the Housing White Paper ('Fixing our broken housing market'- February 2017), recognising these issues and the need to assist people now who are unable to access accommodation to meet their needs. The White Paper states that the Government is committed to supporting local authorities to have up to date plans in place to build more of the right kind of homes in the right place and at a faster pace.

The Housing White Paper consultation programme highlights the key issues below:

- Planning for the 'right homes in the right places'
- Building homes faster
- Diversifying the market
- Helping people now

The Paper supports that "*all local authorities should develop an up-to-date plan with their communities that meets their housing requirements (or, if that is not possible, to work with neighbouring authorities to ensure that it is met), decide applications for development promptly and ensure that the homes they have planned for are built out on time.*" The issue for Oxford City is that without agreement with its neighbouring Oxfordshire district councils under the 'Duty to Cooperate', it has limited scope of useable building land to meet the needs of its increasing population.

In addition, the Paper proposes to introduce a standard methodology of calculating 'Objectively Assessed Need' for housing, therefore this could potentially impact upon the development of the City Council's Local Plan review 2016-36 (and the Local Plans of neighbouring district authorities in Oxfordshire) where there has been reliance upon evidence such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 to calculate housing needs.



The Government has introduced further legislation and amendments as outlined below:-

### Impact of the Housing & Planning Act 2016

The key points introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 are:-

- Introduction of Starter Homes (new build homes available exclusively for first time buyers aged over 23 and under 40 and will be sold at 20 per cent below normal market prices)
- Promotion of self-build and custom house building placing a duty on local authorities to ensure they have enough plots of land available for self-build to meet local demand.
- Measures to help tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector, including:
  - allowing local authorities to apply for a banning order to prevent a particular landlord/letting agent from continuing to operate where they have committed certain housing offences,
  - creating a national database of rogue landlords/letting agents,
  - allowing tenants or local authorities to apply for a rent repayment order where a landlord has committed certain offences
- Allowing private landlords to recover abandoned premises in England without a court order
- Estate Agents fees and rent charges
- Improved powers for local authorities to Compulsory Purchase land/property to assist development.
- Social Housing, including:
  - Introduction of voluntary Right to Buy for Housing Association properties
  - Levy on sale of vacant higher value local authority housing
  - Rents for high income social tenants (*'pay to stay'* – see below)
  - Reducing regulation of social housing
  - Insolvency of Registered Providers of social housing
  - Mandatory use of fixed term tenancies – Secure/'Lifetime tenancies' no longer to be awarded by Local Authorities.

When taking action to address the challenges set by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Oxford City Council will need to take into consideration local affordability and accessibility, and the financial resources available.

Rents for high income social tenants otherwise known as "Pay to stay" was a proposal within the Housing and Planning Act 2016 however, the Government decided in November 2016 to abandon the mandatory scheme. Local authorities and housing associations will continue to have the discretion to implement a 'Pay to Stay' policy for tenants with incomes over £60,000. Oxford City Council has decided not to pursue this at present due to the unaffordability of finding alternative accommodation in Oxford.

If Starter Homes are to be considered as a form of affordable housing in the future, this will affect the Council's current position of what it can require from housebuilders to provide as the affordable housing contribution on large scale developments. Starter

Homes are a market product with no requirement to be affordable in perpetuity. In addition, there are no requirements for these units to meet a local need (e.g. purchasers to have a local connection to Oxford) and the City Council would not have nomination rights to approve purchasers as being in need of such housing locally. Provision of Starter Homes may not be a viable option for housebuilders to provide in some areas of Oxford and, given local house prices and capital deposits required for purchase, Starter Homes may still be unaffordable for many people receiving an average household income. With this in mind, it is not clear if local housing needs would be met by provision of this tenure. Further guidance on the introduction of Starter Homes will be required.

Guidance on the introduction of Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants and the levy on sales of high value void council properties has still to be published, but the concern remains that the revenue generated from higher value sales is unlikely to be enough to both compensate housing associations for the cost of right to buy discounts and to fund replacement affordable housing units in Oxford. Limited development opportunities, high land and build costs, and loss of revenue funding from rents of high value properties could mean that the opportunity to replace social rented housing with a like for like tenure could be cost prohibitive.

Social rented tenure is the most affordable tenure for the majority of households on the Council's housing register. Until now, social rented accommodation has been let with a secure tenancy however this position will need to be revised in light of Housing and Planning Act 2016 emerging guidance in relation to secure tenancies and mandatory use of fixed term/flexible tenancies for new tenants. Given this, the workload of the Landlord Services Team is likely to increase where there are more tenancy reviews to be undertaken in managing and letting fixed term tenancies within our Council-owned stock.

### **Impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The Act introduced new responsibilities that will impact upon the service that Oxford City Council and its partner agencies provide to tackle and prevent homelessness. The Act primarily focusses on early intervention to prevent homelessness and reducing homelessness before crisis point. It is likely that caseloads and the need for resources will increase and therefore it will be a priority for the City Council to amend its housing service delivery model and housing/homelessness



prevention budgets in order to support the implementation of new duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The new duties for local authorities are to commence in 2018/19 and the main changes introduced by the Act are set out as follows:

- A new duty on local authorities to help prevent the homelessness of all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness.
- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days, and what action should be taken to assist e.g. housing plans, debt advice, further support to help them stay in their accommodation or find alternative secure accommodation etc. Early intervention being the main point rather than support provided at crisis point.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Those who have a priority need will be provided with interim accommodation whilst the Local Housing Authority carries out the reasonable steps.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This should ensure that a person's housing situation is considered when they come into contact with wider public services.
- The council's duty to accommodate can be discharged by offering a 6 month Assured Short hold Tenancy.
- Care leavers qualify for a local connection if they have been in local housing authority district for a minimum of 2 years if some or all of it attained at the age of 16.
- Additional opportunities for customers to request a review of decisions made in respect of their homelessness application.

### **Impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012**

The Act introduced changes to housing, council tax and welfare benefits that resulted in benefit caps being applied to households depending on their circumstances. Benefit caps, Local Housing Allowance, bedroom subsidy for under occupancy and the introduction of Universal Credit are making it difficult for low income households to remain in high value housing market areas such as Oxford.

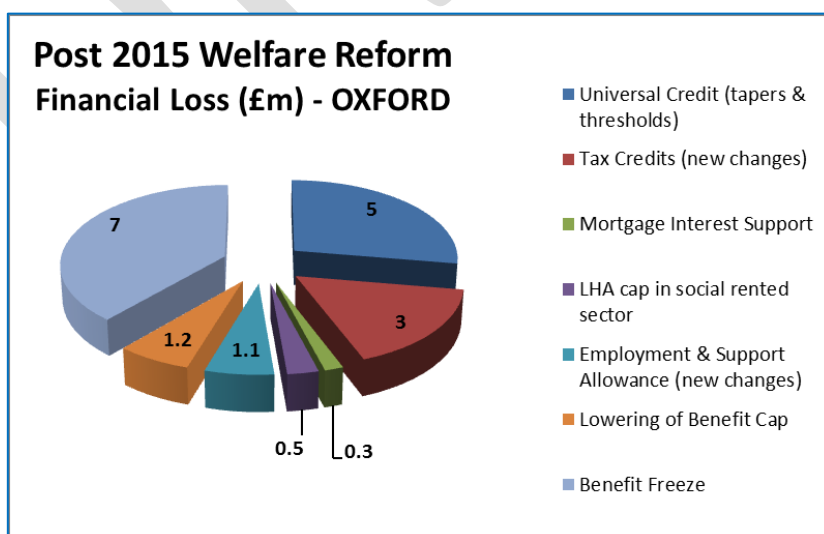
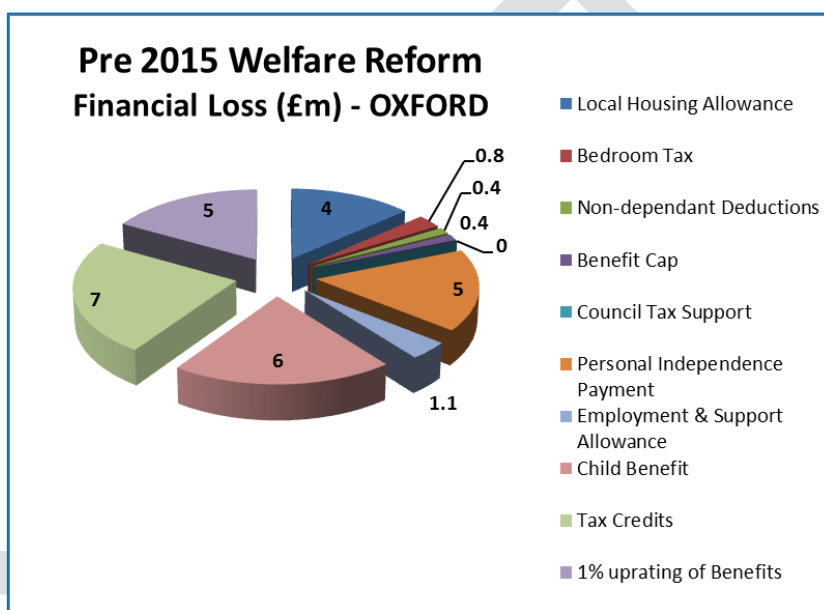
- From 12th December, 2016 the Department for Work and Pensions reduced the benefit cap further for families and couples to £385 per week and £258 per week for single people without children.
- From 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2017 personal allowances that can be included will be restricted to two dependent children.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2017 unless there is an exemption, 18 to 21 year olds will not be eligible for the housing element of Universal Credit.

The impact will be significant for young people who will no longer be able to claim help with housing costs and live independently at an affordable level. Larger families with more than two children may experience difficulty paying their household costs where

their benefits are limited as a result of reduced personal allowance rates. The City Council's Welfare Reform Team has been in contact with those households who have been identified as being potentially impacted by these changes. The Team is working with customers to maximise their income, manage debt and help them improve their work prospects. The Housing Needs Team is also working with these customers to prevent loss of accommodation however, the impact of the changes in relation to homelessness are still to be seen over the longer term.

More detail about Welfare Reform changes can be found in Appendix C and D. Overall, the financial impact of Welfare Reform can be demonstrated by the following charts:

Source of information below: **The Uneven Impact of Welfare Reform (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, March 2016).**



## Impact of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

The Act requires local authorities and registered providers of social housing in England to reduce social housing rents by 1% a year for 4 years from a frozen 2015 to 2016 baseline and to comply with maximum rent requirements for new tenancies. Oxford City Council's 2015/16 budget detailed an ambitious Housing Revenue Account capital programme over the next ten years exceeding £264m. However, the Government's 2015 summer budget introduced rent reductions, disposal of void housing stock to pay a levy to finance the extension of Right to Buy to Registered Providers' tenants, and Pay to Stay (not a mandatory requirement). To accommodate these changes, the Council has had to reduce the level of its planned investment. Some of the original programme is now being delivered via the Council's wholly owned Housing Company but the 1% rent reduction will mean a reduction in rental resources to the Council of £1.7m over the 4 year period. This figure, when compounded over the 30 year timeframe for the Council's business plan, runs into tens of millions of lost resources that clearly prevent the Council from delivering many new dwellings as originally planned.





## OXFORDSHIRE CONTEXT

### Strategic Economic Plan

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) combines education establishments, business, research facilities and local authorities to produce a holistic approach to the county's economic output. Oxfordshire is considered to have one of the most innovative business cultures in England and has made a significant contribution to the country's exports. It is world renowned for its academic excellence and scientific research.

The City Council requires that the majority of affordable housing be provided as social rented tenure, however provision of suitable housing that includes a range of social, intermediate and home ownership tenure options will be important to attract a skilled workforce and support the continued economic growth of Oxford.

**OxLEP Priorities** are:

	<b>people</b>	Deliver and attract specialist and flexible skills at all levels, across all sectors, as required by our businesses, with full, inclusive employment and fulfilling jobs.
	<b>place</b>	Provide the quality environment and choice of homes needed to support growth and capitalise upon the exceptional quality of life, vibrant economy and the dynamic urban and rural communities of our county.
	<b>enterprise</b>	Encourage innovation led growth, underpinned by Oxfordshire's strengths in University research and development, business collaboration and supply chain potential.
	<b>connectivity</b>	Allow people to move freely, connect easily and provide the services, environment and facilities needed by a dynamic, growing and dispersed economy

Source: <http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/content/lep-priorities>



## Oxford and Oxfordshire Investment Deal

Continuing work with the Oxford and Oxfordshire Investment Deal aims to further develop innovation-led growth by maximising the area's world-class assets, such as the universities of Oxford and Oxford Brookes, and 'big science' facilities such as those at the Harwell Oxford Campus and Innovation Campus.

In November 2017, the The Oxfordshire Growth Board (Oxford City Council is a partner) announced that the Oxfordshire councils and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) had reached an outline Housing and Growth Agreement with Government. This would see an additional £215 million of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county.

Going forward, the ambitious and comprehensive investment programme will help to deliver sustainable development with a focus on quality of place and more affordable housing. It will be overseen by the Growth Board, working in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, the Highways Agency and other partners.

The Growth Board aims to secure the ongoing investment needed to deliver properly planned growth and economic development over the coming years. This will support councils to achieve the ambition of 100,000 new homes across the county over the period 2011-2031, as identified through the 2014 countywide Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plans.

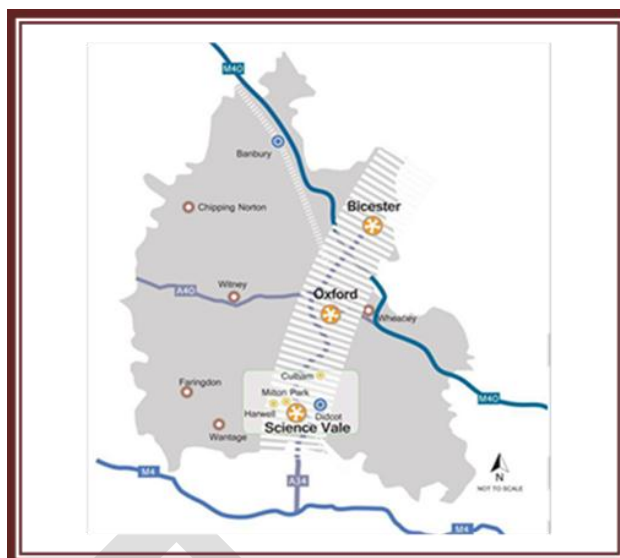
The Government recognises the importance of Oxfordshire's knowledge intensive economy for UK with two universities and unique research institutions. It has committed to work with OxLEP to develop a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to back Oxfordshire's world class science and innovation assets, and identify and grow new sectors. Support is also to be provided to help scale up high-growth companies, to identify and address specific skills needs and to attract further investment and expansion of the Science Vale and Didcot Enterprise Zones.

Under the terms of the agreement the Government will provide Oxfordshire's six local authorities with £60 million of funding for affordable housing, £150 million of funding (£30m for five years) for infrastructure improvements that will benefit existing communities and unlock new development sites. A further £5 million of capacity funding will help to meet the costs of taking the investment programme forward. This includes the development of a Joint Strategic Spatial Plan, providing a county-wide integrated planning framework to guide the sustainable growth.

In addition, the National Infrastructure Commission's report on the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor makes recommendations to Government to maximise the economic potential of the area. It recommends a significant increase in the number of homes across the corridor and makes recommendations about investment in infrastructure required to deliver them. Government has welcomed the report and will respond in full in 2018. This could bring further opportunities to invest in infrastructure and housing.



Map 1.1 – Oxford and Oxfordshire Investment Deal ‘knowledge spine’



### Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014 <sup>18</sup>

The SHMA is a technical study intended to help the Oxfordshire local planning authorities understand how many homes will be needed in the period 2011 - 2031. The SHMA estimates that around 2,887 additional homes will be needed each year to 2031 across Oxfordshire to accommodate the growing population and to meet the backlog of housing need.

	Households 2011	Households 2031	Change in households	% change from 2011	Housing Requirement	Housing Requirement (per annum)
Cherwell	56,882	69,219	12,336	21.7%	12,830	641
Oxford	54,999	69,523	14,524	26.4%	15,105	755
South Oxfordshire	54,391	63,610	9,219	17.0%	9,634	482
Vale of White Horse	49,781	58,856	9,074	18.2%	9,365	468
West Oxfordshire	43,509	53,789	10,280	23.6%	10,815	541
Oxfordshire	259,562	314,996	55,434	21.4%	57,748	2,887

Source of Table above: Oxfordshire SHMA 2014

### Local Context - Oxford

Delivering the activities outlined in the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21, is further supported by the City Council’s strategic vision and corporate commitment. The following documents provide a clear strategy and foundation on which to base future decisions to deliver the Council’s vision 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’*.

<sup>18</sup> SHMA report [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1753/shma\\_final\\_report](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1753/shma_final_report)

## **Oxford 2050: A vision for a successful and sustainable city for everyone**

The City Council is working on development of a future vision for the City: Oxford 2050, to guide future corporate plans and investment plans for the City. It provides an overarching strategic long-term vision to bring together economy, society and environment in a joined up way. The vision set out in 'Oxford 2050' has influenced the development of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the actions that stem from it.

## **Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020**

The Corporate Plan is Oxford City Council's key strategic document, setting out its corporate commitment and strategic direction over a five year period, and highlighting key areas of new investment. There are currently five priorities under the Corporate Plan:



Delivery of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 will impact on the delivery of all of these priorities but will mainly contribute towards the priority of 'Meeting Housing Needs'.

## **Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 – Oxford**

As mentioned earlier, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014 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 affordability pressures within Oxford, the SHMA estimates that around 1,029 affordable homes would need to be delivered each year within the same period to meet the backlog and future affordable housing need. Delivery of housing is discussed further in Chapter 4 of this strategy and highlights that although the Government is consulting on new methodology for calculating unmet housing needs, it still remains that the City needs thousands more homes to meet the housing needs of a growing population and to support economic growth.

## **Local Plan 2026 (and Local Plan Review 2036)**

The Local Plan is important because it sets out the planning policies that are used to determine how the City Council wants our city to look and feel, guiding new developments to the right locations, whilst protecting and improving the environment and people's quality of life. Once finalised, the Local Plan 2036 review will set new policies in place to ensure the City's housing, environment and economy is developed and delivered in a sustainable way in the future to meet the longer-term needs of Oxford.

## Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Oxford

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) demonstrate the potential availability of housing sites to deliver the housing needed in the City. The report for Oxford can be found on the City Council's website.<sup>19</sup>

## Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Oxford

Like every local planning authority in Oxfordshire, the City Council must produce a housing and employment land availability assessment to show the potential availability of sites in our area. This is known as a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). Previously the City Council was only required to produce a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which only needed to consider housing sites (not employment)<sup>20</sup>. The main issue arising from both the SHLAA and the HELAA reports is that there is a limited capacity within the city to develop sufficient housing numbers to meet the identified need in the SHMA 2014. Chapter 4 of this strategy includes more detail about the capacity to build within the City boundary.

## Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2015-19

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-19 identified priorities for health on a countywide basis and how housing can contribute towards improving the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire residents. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides data on the health and lifestyle trends in Oxfordshire. It also looks at the estimated changes in the county's demographics and employment. The local context is provided by the JSNA Oxford report for March 2017. Findings of the JSNA help to influence the development of housing and homelessness prevention services going forward to ensure that the opportunity for inequality (particularly around health inequality) is reduced.

The Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy covers the following priority areas:

### Children's Trust

**Priority 1:** All children have a healthy start in life and stay healthy into adulthood

**Priority 2:** Narrowing the gap for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

**Priority 3:** Keeping all children and young people safe

**Priority 4:** Raising achievement for all children and young people

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<sup>19</sup> SHLAA report [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1720/shlaa\\_-\\_december\\_2014](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1720/shlaa_-_december_2014)

<sup>20</sup> HELA report

[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20201/oxford\\_growth\\_strategy/747/housing\\_and\\_economic\\_land\\_availability\\_assessment](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20201/oxford_growth_strategy/747/housing_and_economic_land_availability_assessment)

## **Joint Management Groups**

**Priority 5:** Living and working well: Adults with long-term conditions, physical disabilities, learning disabilities or mental health problems living independently and achieving their full potential.

**Priority 6:** Support older people to live independently with dignity whilst reducing the need for care and support.

**Priority 7:** Working together to improve quality and value for money in the Health and Social Care System.

## **Health Improvement Board**

**Priority 8:** Preventing early death and improving quality of life in later years

**Priority 9:** Preventing chronic disease through tackling obesity

**Priority 10:** Tackling the broader determinants of health through better housing and preventing homelessness

**Priority 11:** Preventing infectious disease through immunisation

In relation to this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21, priorities 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will influence the delivery of housing and homelessness services.

## **Health Inequalities Commission Report 2016**

Housing has a substantial impact upon individual's quality of health. The Independent Health Inequalities Commission was convened to gather and review the evidence on inequalities in health in Oxfordshire and, as a contribution to the development of the local strategy for health improvement, to identify areas for policy development likely to reduce these inequalities. The review was undertaken in 2016 and a report was produced<sup>21</sup> with 60 recommendations for action set out under the themes:

- Five Common Principles
- Cross cutting themes of access to services, housing and homelessness, rurality
- Promoting Healthy Lifestyles
- Life course approach, focussing on Beginning Well, Living Well and Ageing Well.

Recommendations within the report included:

Public agencies, universities and health partners to work together to:

- develop new models of funding and delivery of affordable homes with a range of tenures to meet the needs of vulnerable people and key workers
- maximise the potential to deliver affordable homes on public sector land, including provision of key worker housing and extra care and specialist housing
- undertake a strategic review of public assets underutilized or lying vacant
- support Rough Sleepers into settled accommodation
- maintain and adequately resource homelessness pathways
- take action to reduce fuel poverty
- ensure that all policies have an equality impact assessment, and ensure that consideration is given to the health needs of particular groups or locations to

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<sup>21</sup> **Recommendations for action on Health Inequalities in Oxfordshire :**

<http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s35131/Oxfordshire-Health-Inequalities-Commission-Report-28-October-2016.pdf>

reduce inequality in provision and improve access to health services/support across the county.

The relevant recommendations have been taken into account in developing this Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-21.

### Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) March 2017 – Oxford Report

The JSNA provides an Oxfordshire context to estimated changes in demographics, employment trends, health and lifestyle data. The local context is provided by the March 2017, JSNA District report for Oxford which highlights the following:

- As of mid-2015, the estimated population of Oxford was 162,100 residents<sup>22</sup> and by 2030, the County Council projections estimate an increase in population by more than 11%.
- The population aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 50% to 4,200 by 2030 – this is almost half of the increase estimated for other Oxfordshire districts (see JSNA Districts reports march 2017).
- Over half of births in Oxford in 2015 were to mothers born outside the UK, the highest proportion of which was to mothers born in Europe.

#### Predicted change in population, 2015 to 2030

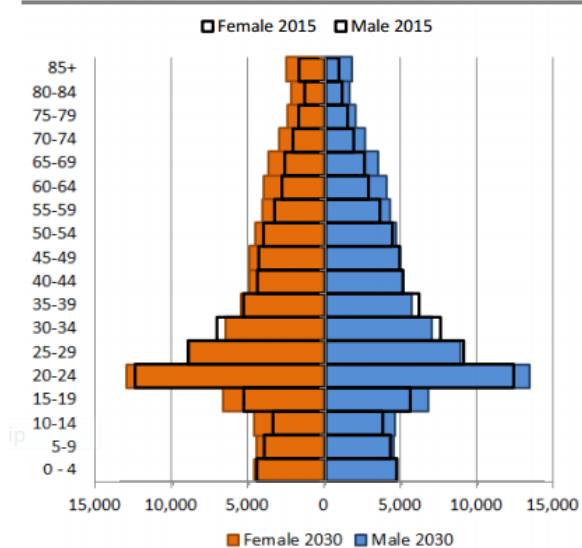


Chart shows Oxfordshire County Council’s population change estimate which uses the Office for National Statistics 2015 SPD\_v2 in preference to the mid-year estimates. The ONS mid-year estimates model student flows differently.

Source: Oxfordshire County Council

### JSNA Wider Determinants

- Between December 2015 and December 2016 the number of claimants of Job Seeker Allowance and Universal Credit in Oxford increased from 920 to 985 (+7%). In December 2016, Northfield Brook and Blackbird Leys were 2 of the 3 wards in Oxfordshire with the highest number of claimants.

<sup>22</sup> Source: Oxfordshire County Council

- In 2015, the IMD supplementary indices estimated 5,125 children in Oxford were affected by income deprivation. 3,270 older people in Oxford were affected by income deprivation.

## Health

- In 2011 Oxford had double the national average of young carers (aged under 16). The number of carers in this age group in Oxford was 90, of which half (45) were residents in the wards of Cowley Marsh, Northfield Brook, Lye Valley, Blackbird Leys and Hinksey Park. Oxford was also above the South East average on the proportion of working age carers aged 35 to 49.
- Trend data shows an increase in the percentage of patients with a recorded diagnosis of a severe and enduring mental health problem in the GP registered population in Oxford city.
- There were 3 wards in Oxford with a significantly higher mortality ratio for cancers than England (2010-14): Headington Hill & Northway, Blackbird Leys and Cowley.
- Northfield Brook in Oxford has a significantly higher rate of emergency hospital admissions for coronary heart disease than England (2010-11 to 2014-15).
- Cowley in Oxford has a significantly higher mortality ratio from stroke than England (2010-14).

## Lifestyles

- 52% of people aged 16 or over in Oxford are classified as overweight or obese, this was below the county, regional and national averages.
- In Oxford, obesity in reception aged children (aged 4 or 5) and Year 6 children (aged 10 or 11) have each increased.
- Admission episodes for alcohol-related conditions in Oxford increased between 2013-14 and 2014-15, remaining significantly above the national and regional averages.
- 7 wards in Oxford had a significantly higher rate of hospital admissions linked to alcohol.
- The rate of deaths from drug misuse (not including alcohol and tobacco) was statistically above the national average in Oxford.
- In 2016 there were around 3,300 police recorded victims of domestic abuse (crime and incidents) in Oxford, up by 3% from the previous year.
- Between 2015 and 2016, the number of police recorded victims of Honour Based Violence, Child Sexual Exploitation and Modern Slavery each increased in Oxford.
- The rate of emergency admissions for injuries due to falls in males and females aged 80+ in Oxford was significantly higher than the England rate.

Findings of the JSNA report on Oxford, will influence the development of housing and homelessness prevention services going forward to ensure that the opportunity for inequality is reduced.



## APPENDIX D

### Welfare Reform – Summary of main changes since 2011

#### 2011

Health in Pregnancy Grant and Child Trust Fund abolished. Educational Maintenance Allowance closed to new applicants in England.

New rules applied for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) assessments.

Child Benefit (CHB) frozen for three years from April.

Increase in housing benefit (HB) non-dependant deductions, and substantial restrictions to Local Housing Allowance (LHA):

- maximum four bedroom rate regardless of household size
- new maximum rates
- restricted from 50% to 30% of market rents in an area
- £15 excess rule removed

Discretionary housing payment (DHP) budget increased to £30m in 2011/12.

Triple lock introduced for state retirement pension, although winter fuel payments are reduced.

#### 2012

Age threshold for LHA shared accommodation rate raised from 25 to 35.

DHP budget increased to £70m in 2012/13.

LHA rates frozen from April.

From May, lone parents on Income Support (IS) must claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) once their youngest child turns five.

Annual benefit uprating of 1% a year announced in Autumn Statement.

#### 2013

CHB taxable for claimants with annual income above £50K.

DWP benefit appeal process revised, with the aim of reducing tribunal cases.

Council tax benefit replaced with localised Council Tax Support, with a 10% budget reduction.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) starts to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people making new claims. PIP aims to reduce DLA spend by 20% by 2017.

DHP budget increased to £155m in 2013/14.

“Bedroom tax” reduces HB eligibility for under-occupying social housing tenants:

- by 14% for tenants with one spare bedroom
- by 25% for tenants with two or more spare bedrooms

From April, Universal Credit (UC) starts to replace HB, JSA, IS, ESA and tax credits with a single monthly payment, originally within Pathfinder areas in the north west of England.

LHA rates are pegged to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than market rents.

Community care grants and most crisis loans are abolished and replaced by local welfare schemes.

From July, the benefit cap restricts the total amount of benefit a household can get, with HB reduced for households with benefit income above the cap limit:

- £500 a week for couples and families
- £350 a week for single people without children

In December, bedroom tax amended so an extra bedroom is allowed for disabled children who cannot share and for adults needing another bedroom for a carer.

Habitual residence test tightened to reflect future JSA restrictions for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers.

#### **2014**

In January, LHA rates updated annually, with maximum annual increase of 1%.

Habitual residence test reforms mean that:

- JSA for EEA jobseekers limited to six months
- EEA jobseekers and British nationals returning from more than a short period abroad cannot get JSA until they have been resident for three months

These rules are extended to CHB and Child Tax Credit (CTC) claims in July.

DHP budget increased to £165m in 2014/15.

Waiting period for JSA increased from three to seven days. More stringent job seeking requirements are introduced.

Lone parents on IS required to undertake work focused interviews once youngest child turns one, with mandatory work-related activity for lone parents of three and four year olds.

Rollout of UC to jobseekers with children begins in November.

#### **2015**

Total welfare spending (not all benefits are included) capped at £119.5bn for 2015/16.

DHP budget cut to £125m in 2015/16.

Independent Living Fund for disabled people closed.

Emergency budget proposes:

- Four year freeze for working age benefits from April 2016, including LHA rates
- Lowering benefit cap
- Tax credit and UC changes to limit support for families with more than two children, lower work

thresholds and increasing taper rates

#### **2016**

New National Living Wage introduced in April.

DHP budget increased to £150m in 2016/17.

Government U-turns on cuts to tax credit work allowances (and taper rates) but retains these in UC. Non-disabled claimants without children get no work allowance.

HB backdating limited from six months to one month. HB family premium removed.

In November, benefit cap reduced for people already affected, and in December lower cap applied to all claims. New benefit cap limits are:

- £384 a week for couples and families
- £257 a week for single people without children

Supreme Court decides bedroom tax unfairly discriminates against disabled adults who cannot share a bedroom and disabled children who need extra carers.

Benefit cap exemptions for guardians and carers introduced.

#### **2017**

Extra bedrooms for adult partners who cannot share and disabled children with extra carers introduced in HB.

ESA Work-Related Activity component abolished in April.

DHP budget increased to £185m in 2017/18. DHP budget for Scottish authorities devolved to Scottish government.

Bereavement Support Payment replaces existing bereavement benefits in April.

Earnings threshold for benefit cap exemption increases from £430 a month to

£520 a month (equivalent to 16 hours a week work paid at National Living Wage).

Two child limit introduced for Child Tax Credit (CTC), UC and HB for children born after 6 April. Family elements in CTC and UC also removed.

No UC housing costs element payable for most people under 22.

Free childcare entitlement increases from 15 hours to 30 hours a week for working parents of 3-4 year olds in September.

Parents on UC are expected to look for work once their youngest child turns three.

## **2018**

From April, Support of Mortgage Interest payments to be paid as a loan, with claimants repaying the loan when returning to work or selling their home.

From November, two child limit applied to UC claims, with families with more than two children no longer directed to claim CTC instead.

## **2019**

Government expects UC to be available to all new claimants from July, with claimants on legacy benefits transferred to UC by March 2022.

*Produced by Oxford City Council's Welfare Reform Team (June 2017): NB\*\* some technical changes to tax credits are omitted.*

## **Glossary**

Please note: This glossary is intended to help readers make the most of this strategy and is not intended to give a precise legal definition of terms used.

### **Affordable housing**

Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

**Social rented housing** is owned by local authorities and private registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. Rent levels are generally set much lower than those charged on the open market.

**Affordable rented housing** is owned by local authorities and private registered providers of social housing and let to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

**Intermediate housing** is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership (see below) and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

**Shared Ownership** is where a share of a dwelling is sold (between 25% and 75%) and the buyer pays rent on the remaining share.

### **Care Leaver**

Is defined as a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by the local authority at school-leaving age or after that date.

### **Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**

A web based service advertising council or housing association properties when they become vacant which allows people on the housing register to choose to bid interest for properties rather than simply waiting for the council to allocate them a property. The applicant bidding with the highest priority is then offered the property.

### **Community-led Housing (CLH)**

Community-led housing is designed and managed by local people and built to meet the needs of the community – not for private profit. Community-led housing is a way for local communities to provide their own decent and affordable homes. It is often designed to help certain groups – for example young people, older people, or those in need of affordable family homes.

### **Decent Homes Standard**

A central government set basic minimum standard for the quality of council housing.

### **House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**

A house in multiple occupation is a property rented by three or more unrelated people in two or more separate households who share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen.

### **Housing First**

Housing First is an approach that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based supports people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

Is a ring-fenced account for budgets relating to council housing services. The remainder of council budgets are referred to as the General Fund.

### **Key Worker**

An employee who provides a vital service, especially in the police, health, or education sectors

### **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

There are 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships across England. They are local business led partnerships between local authorities and businesses and play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), launched in March 2011, is responsible for championing and developing the Oxfordshire economy.

### **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

Local housing allowance is a way of working out how much housing benefit a person can get to help pay their rent to a private landlord. It is based on the lower end of market rent. The rates are set for Broad Rental Market areas – the Oxford Broad Rental market area includes Charlbury down to Didcot and Witney to Wallingford. The LHA rate will depend on how many bedrooms are needed to accommodate the household, not the amount of the rent.

### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

Is the single point of contact for all professionals to report safeguarding concerns

### **Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB)**

The Growth Board is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners. It has been set up to facilitate and enable joint working on economic development, strategic planning and growth. It also oversees all the projects agreed in the City Deal and Local Growth Deals that fall to the councils, working collaboratively to deliver and has an overall responsibility to manage these programmes of work alongside the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).

### **Registered Provider (RP)**

The Homes and Communities Agency maintain a statutory register of social housing providers. Registered providers include local authority landlords and private registered providers such as housing associations.

## **SSAFA**

The Armed Forces charity, formerly known as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association, is a UK charity that provides lifelong support to serving men and women and veterans from the British Armed Forces and their families or dependents.

## **Statutorily homeless / Homeless acceptances**

Statutorily homeless are those households which meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority. Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation. A "main homelessness duty" is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as "acceptances".

## **Sustainable communities**

A sustainable community is one that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient.

## **Temporary accommodation**

Under certain circumstances the Council has a legal obligation to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants, if required.

## **Tenancy Strategy**

A Tenancy Strategy is a plan that sets out how the social housing in an area is let and how long tenancies should be granted for.

## **The Prince's Foundation**

The Prince's Foundation for Building Community (formerly The Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture until 2001 and The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment until 2012) is an educational charity established in 1986 by HRH The Prince of Wales to teach and demonstrate in practice those principles of traditional urban design and architecture which put people and the communities of which they are part at the centre of the design process

## **TPAS**

Tenants Participation Advisory Service – the tenant engagement experts

## **Universal Credit**

Universal Credit is a benefit which combines a number of existing benefits into one claim:

Jobseekers Allowance

Housing Benefit

Working Tax Credit

Child Tax Credit

Employment and Support Allowance

Income Support



**Vulnerable Person**

A vulnerable person is someone in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, mental illness or physical disability or maybe at risk of abuse or neglect.

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