



**Blaby District  
Council  
Housing Strategy  
2021 – 2026**





I am pleased to introduce to you Blaby District Council’s new Housing Strategy 2020-2025.

The strategy outlines in detail how we propose to improve Blaby residents’ access to suitable, affordable housing within the District with four key strategic priorities.

- **Strategic Priority 1: Increasing the supply of Affordable Homes**
- **Strategic Priority 2: Provide Specialist Housing for Vulnerable Groups**
- **Strategic Priority 3: Prevent Homelessness and end Rough Sleeping**
- **Strategic Priority 4 - To minimise the environmental impact of the existing housing stock and future housing development.**

A good home is fundamental to feeling safe, secure, and well. A good home provides a settled base to maximise learning and employment opportunities for all generations. Since our last Housing Strategy, we have delivered a significant number of new homes that match the requirements of the District, both in the market and the affordable sector and in unprecedented, difficult times we have continued to prevent homelessness.

This ambitious strategy offers exciting opportunities to continue to build upon already developed strong partnerships so that we can maximise the delivery of a range of housing options for our residents. It tackles homelessness issues and

encourages wellbeing through the promotion of independent living.

We will strive to meet these aims whilst contributing to the Councils ambition to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

As portfolio holder for Housing and Community Services, I passionately believe that we can continue to make a difference to people’s lives and the foundation for that is to get our housing offer right.

**Cllr Les Phillimore**

**Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities Services**

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## 1. Links to other Council and Partner related Policies and Objectives

The Housing Strategy is an overarching document that covers all the aspects of the Housing Services Team and other housing related activities in the Community Services Team. This includes work with the private and third sector, rural housing, the provision of aids and adaptations, specialist housing, older persons housing, the enabling of new housing supply and the prevention of homelessness. The strategy links with many corporate and housing documents and reflects the priorities and actions identified within them.



It is also key to recognise that we as a Local Authority cannot deliver our housing priorities without the support and cooperation of many of our partners from the Housing, Community and Health Sectors. These services include the Police, NHS Trusts, Probation Services and Third Sector Charity organisations. We will work closely with these groups to align our policies and ambitions with theirs. It is with this collaboration that we can build, manage, and sustain our communities and provide the best outcomes for our residents.



## 2. Key Blaby Housing Characteristics

The District of Blaby covers 80 square miles and is a mix of both urban and rural areas. Its key housing characteristics are listed below, these are covered in more detail in the Blaby Profile chapter which can be found at Appendix A.

- The District predominately consists of 3 and 4+ bedroomed homes which make up 74% of our total (Higher than the national average of 69%)
- Owner occupiers make up 82% of all homes (higher than both the Leicestershire and national average)
- The Private Rented Sector accounts for 10% of the housing stock compared to a national average of 17%
- At 8% we have a significantly small provision of affordable housing compared to the national average of 16%
- Over 65% of the affordable housing stock is only suitable for older people, a lot being sheltered housing stock previously owned by the Council

### National Policy Context

In recent years there have been a raft of new national policies and initiatives aimed at combatting the well documented national housing and homelessness crisis. The table below highlights the main initiatives and gives a brief description of the changes. More detailed information on the national policy context can be found at Appendix B.

#### Homes England Re-Brand and Re-Focus

Introduction of Strategic Partnerships and a renewed focus on unlocking development with the following key objectives:

- Supporting the affordable housing market
- Supporting modern methods of construction
- Delivering home ownership products
- Addressing barriers facing small builders
- Expert support to priority locations

#### Housing White Paper - Fixing our Broken Housing Market 2017

Four key aims:

- Planning for the right homes in the right places
- Building homes faster
- Diversify the housing market
- Helping people now

## Planning for the Future White Paper: Consultation

This current consultation has the potential to bring significant changes to the planning system and to affordable housing policy, these include:

- Simplifying local plan production
- A National Infrastructure Levy in place of S106 agreements
- Introduction of a new affordable housing tenure “First Homes”
- First Homes will account for 25% of any affordable housing contribution on major schemes

## Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA)

The HRA introduced a large number of new duties emphasising a proactive and vastly more preventative approach. Key changes include:

- A more extensive administration burden
- Meaningful help for all irrespective of priority need status
- Prevention duty extended from 28 to 56 days
- Duty to carry out a full assessment and produce personalised housing plans with eligible applicants
- Specific bodies now have a “Duty to Refer” people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- A more expanded and complexed review mechanism



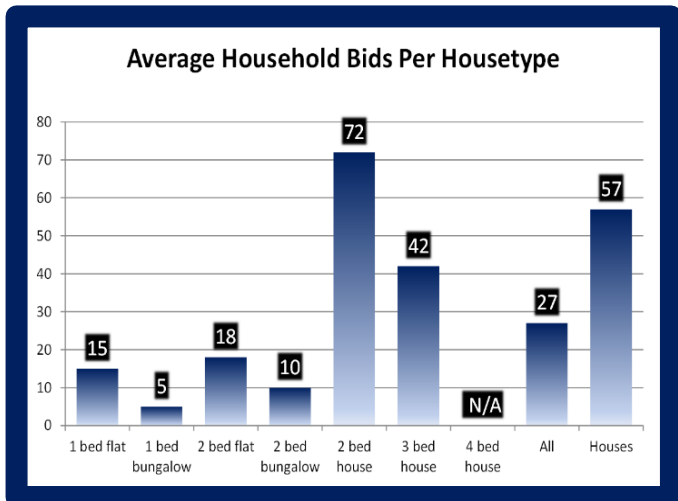
### 3. Strategic Priority One: Increasing the supply of Affordable Homes

Our need to focus on the improved provision of Affordable Housing and maximising the potential of our current stock remains as critical now as it has been for the lifetime of the previously adopted Housing Strategy in 2015.

#### Challenges: Existing Need

To demonstrate the existing need for new build affordable housing, it is useful to understand the position that our residents face when seeking affordable housing.

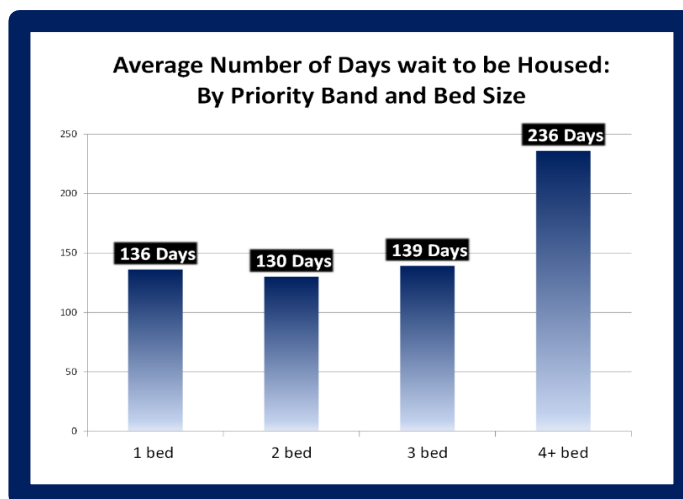
The following graph shows the average number of households that put forward a nomination or 'bid' for each property type we advertise through our Choice based Lettings System.



Over the last year an average of 72 families placed a bid for each 2-bedroom house that became available. This is a clear representation of the challenges we face. Looking further into the figures other key challenges emerge. Much of the current Social Housing stock in the district is now over 50 years old and therefore is not as attractive as modern build

standards for our residents. This is represented by the much lower figures for one or two-bedroom flats. It is our ambition for all households, especially families with children to have access to their own private outside space. This is especially prevalent now given the recent reliance on access to private outside space during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is also clear when we look at the extremely low uptake for sheltered flatted accommodation and one and two-bedroom bungalows. These ageing property types no longer meet the needs or aspirations of our residents.



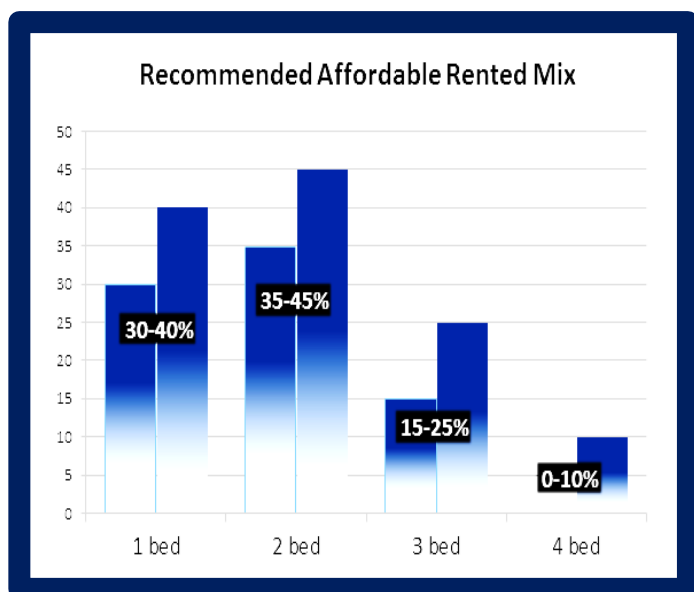
Further evidence that represents the significant challenge of our housing position is demonstrated above. Across the property types our residents who are considered to be in Priority need wait an average of 5 months to be housed. For those in the High Band category (the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest band) and households who are still experiencing significant accommodation challenges, this waiting time rises to 13 months.



### Challenges: Future Need

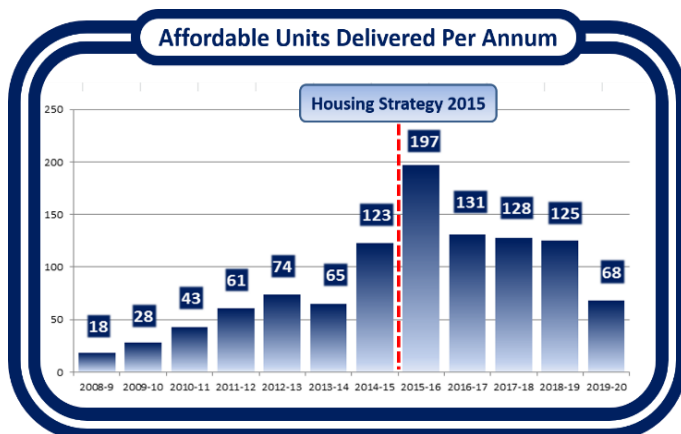
It is also strategically important to have a grasp of the emerging needs of the district. To better understand this, we have commissioned a Blaby Housing Needs Assessment (BHNA). The research looks not only at the current position but also factors in population growth, demographic movements of population from other areas and the economic profile of the housing market.

Analysing these trends, the Assessment (completed in the summer of 2020) indicates that we need to provide 399 affordable units per year up to 2039 in order to meet both the current and future need. The BHNA also provides us with a suggested mix of house types.

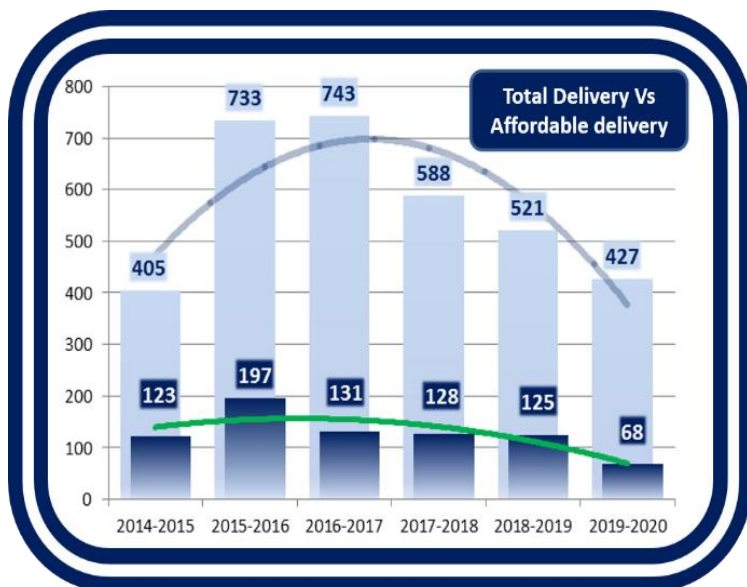


### Challenges: Current Delivery Rate

Over the previous five years we have delivered an average of 130 units per year. This is an improvement from the years prior to that, however, is still significantly short of the required need which stood at 273 prior to our most recent assessment.



Overall housing delivery has a major impact on the number of affordable housing completions. Much of our affordable provision is delivered via developer obligations on Market driven sites of over 15 units. Consequently, because overall housing delivery on these sites has diminished so have our affordable delivery numbers.



### Increasing New Build Affordable Delivery

#### Opportunities: Strategic Partnerships

Despite the recent slowdown, there are increasing opportunities to deliver a greater number of affordable units in the lifetime of this strategy.

A key driver for these opportunities is the introduction of Strategic Partnerships between Homes England (the body responsible for the allocation of Government Grants for affordable housing) and Registered Providers.

Homes England have introduced the Strategic Partnership model to give Registered Providers much more flexibility in their new build programmes by allowing upfront payment of grants. For more information on Strategic Partnerships please see Appendix B.

The largest affordable housing provider in our District, EMH Homes, has been awarded Strategic Partnership status as have 5 other major Registered Providers who are active in our district. In the case of EMH homes, being a Strategic Partner has allowed them to predict an 80% increase in development for affordable homes compared to their development plan under the previous grant scheme. As a result, we have already seen an increase in our pipeline for 100% all affordable sites.

### **Opportunities: Increased Grant Funding**

Grant funding for Affordable Housing has been increased for both Strategic Partners and other Registered Providers.

Affordable housing remains a key priority for National Government. This has been reaffirmed in the latest Affordable Homes Funding spending round confirmed in March 2020. Crucially the Governments levelling up agenda has meant that a greater majority of this funding will be available to Registered Providers in the East Midlands. Homes England recognise Blaby District Council as an area of high unaffordability (our private rental market is over £50 pounds per week more expensive on average when compared to

our Housing Benefit Rate). This status unlocks higher grant rates for the much needed and most affordable Social Rent tenure.

### **Opportunities: Blaby District Economy and Growth Potential**

Economic prosperity and development are key drivers in housing need growth. Parts of Blaby District are recognised as Key Opportunity Areas identified by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). Some of the potential infrastructure projects include

- Rail Freight Interchange
- Optimus Point
- Castle Acres Expansion
- New Everards Brewery
- Lubbethorpe SUE
- Whetstone Pastures Garden Village

The prosperity these developments will encourage (if realised), represents a significant opportunity for housing growth and as such makes the district attractive for market housing developers.

### **Opportunities: Internal Co-operation and joint working**

Planning decisions are a complex process of balancing sometimes competing policies and ambitions. This often includes differing priorities between the site developer and the Council but can also include internal challenges within the Council's own ambitions and policies. We have sought to overcome these internal issues that may adversely affect the supply of affordable housing with the creation an Affordable Housing Group. The group consists of the Strategic Growth Team Manager, the Housing and Community Services Group Manager and the Planning and Economic Development



Group Manager alongside operational officers for both Development Control and Housing Strategy.

The group has a remit to ease affordable housing delivery and in doing so will continue to find solutions to barriers often experienced in the delivery of all affordable housing schemes.

**Opportunities: Existing Partnership Relationships**



Blaby District Council does not own or manage the affordable housing stock in the district. As a result, partnership working is crucial to our ability to deliver on the housing challenges our community faces. Without these partnerships we cannot achieve the aims of this strategy. This includes Homes England, Strategic Partners, Market Developers, neighbouring Local Authorities and our Communities themselves. Our goal over the lifetime of this strategy is to build on our existing partnerships and look to develop new ones.

**Opportunities: Creating more Sustainable Communities using our own funds**

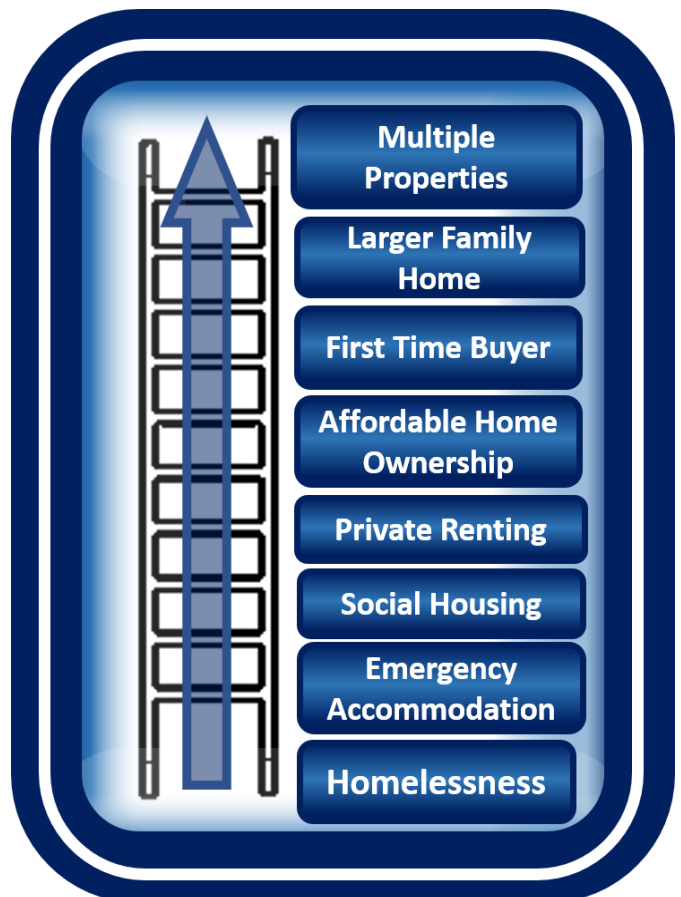
With the increasing potential of our Strategic Partners to deliver all affordable sites the scope for us to influence that

provision increases. Not only do we share a common goal, but we are able to financially support and influence schemes using funds that are ringfenced for the provision of affordable housing.

**Maximising the Existing Affordable Housing Stock**

The other key strand in increasing the supply of affordable housing for our existing and emerging need is working to increase options for those in affordable rented housing who are seeking a route to move up the housing ladder.

It is key to recognise that we should not separate affordable housing and market housing into distinct silos. It is important to recognise that in order for Affordable Housing to function as a safety net for those who cannot afford other types of housing, then there must be a route out of affordable housing for those whose circumstances have positively changed.



**Opportunities: Influence the Market Housing Mix on Private Developer driven sites.**

The Market Housing Stock of the district is heavily weighted towards 3, 4 and 5-bedroom homes. This makes it difficult for those in both private rented accommodation and social housing who wish to purchase their first home.

To address this imbalance, we commit to working closely with Developers at the earliest possible opportunity, normally through pre application discussions. Our remit is to ensure that we achieve the right balance of smaller market homes on all schemes of ten units or more.

We will do this by utilising our evidence base and the Blaby Housing Needs Assessment (BHNA) in order to produce Parish Level needs assessments for each new development in order to support our aims.

Furthermore, we will encourage the increase in provision of private market bungalow accommodation not only to accommodate our increasingly ageing population but also to offer more aspirational opportunities to those households who live in larger homes and wish to downsize.

This in turn will help to free up larger homes for those families who currently occupy the limited amount of existing two-bedroom market properties. Again, increasing the opportunities for those who wish to join the housing market from other tenures.

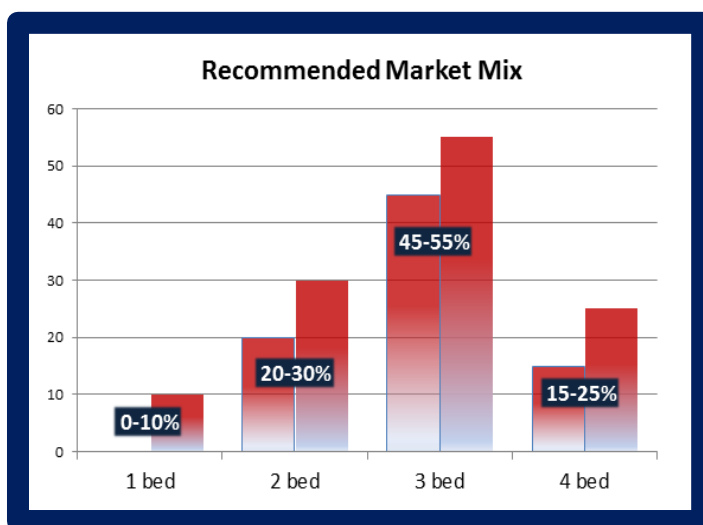
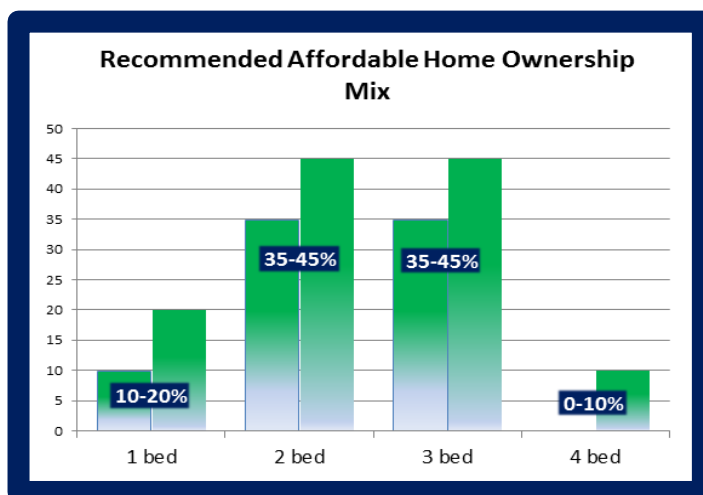
**Opportunities: Provide Affordable Home Ownership Products**

A further key route to free up the supply of current affordable rented stock for those who most need it is to promote the delivery of suitable Affordable Home

Ownership products. For example, Shared Ownership properties.

As per the findings of the BHNA, on major schemes we will seek to provide 20% of our total Affordable Housing provision as affordable home ownership products. We will also consider providing a higher percentage of affordable home ownership products on future all affordable housing sites.

Our BHNA provides a suggested housing mix for both Market housing and Affordable Home Ownership products. This gives us the evidence required in order to influence major development in the future.



## What are we going to do:

- Work in close partnership alongside our Registered Provider partners to develop all affordable sites
- Maximise the delivery of Social Rented Accommodation by promoting and utilising the increased grant funding in Blaby District for this product
- Explore the creative use of Affordable Housing Commuted sums to both increase the viability of sites and have a greater influence on house types and mix
- Work in partnership with private developers at the earliest opportunity to influence both the affordable and market housing mix to best meet our goals
- Approach discussions with developers with an open and flexible collaborative approach when discussing our needs, whilst providing certainty and clarity and ensuring Blaby is an attractive place for them to build.
- Work jointly where relevant with our neighbouring local authorities to maximise any available regional funding for affordable housing
- Continue to work with the Affordable Housing Group to overcome barriers at an early stage for potential affordable housing development
- Provide an evidence-based Parish or District assessment of housing need for all sites over 10 units to inform the design and planning process
- Ensure that individual properties meet the required space standards and quality designated by the Homes England “Housing Quality Indicators”
- Use all available evidence to make sure we provide the right type of housing for our residents and to create sustainable communities across the district
- Continue to explore new ways of developing further evidence of Parish Level Need to support the provision of Rural Exception Sites
- Respond quickly and flexibly to any opportunities for new development when and where they arise including the creative use of our own assets
- Review and update Blaby’s Housing Mix and Affordable Housing SPD to address recent and emerging changes in national legislation and local policy
- We will promote sustainable and modern methods of construction and support the Councils goal to de-carbonise the housing stock by 2050.



## 4. Strategic Priority 2: Provide Specialist Housing for Vulnerable Groups

Our second priority focuses on the provision of specialist housing for vulnerable groups in the district. The National Planning Policy Framework splits these cohorts into two general groups

**Older People** – People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

**People with disabilities** – People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This includes but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

### Challenge: Defining the Need

Whilst we know we have an ageing population and an under provision of specialist housing for the above groups, it has been historically very difficult to pinpoint the specific need we have for specialist housing. This is key when developing new housing to ensure that schemes remain viable in the long term.

To address this our BHNA has investigated these issues in more detail and produced the following estimates for current and future need based on existing prevalence of conditions.

Disability	Age Range	2020	2039	Change	% Change
Dementia	65+	1,452	2,240	788	54%
Mobility problems	65+	3,850	5,650	1,800	47%
Autistic Spectrum Disorders	18-64	587	646	59	10%
	65+	196	270	74	38%
Learning Disabilities	15-64	1,542	1,706	164	11%
	65+	438	598	160	37%
Challenging behaviour	15-64	28	31	3	11%
Impaired mobility	16-64	3,455	3,690	234	7%

Leicestershire County Council has also been seeking to address the lack of need data for their services and have provided a breakdown of what they consider is a County wide shortfall in accommodation types. It is their estimate that we need an additional:

- 1100 Extra Care units countywide over 15 years (Units for residents who cannot remain in their own home but are not suitable to enter the residential care sector)
- 24 Transforming Care bed spaces countywide within 5 years (Units for High Care need residents with Learning Difficulties and Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- 10 Transitions bed spaces per year countywide (Units for those who need to leave hospital but are not yet ready to live independently)
- 60 Working Age Adults (Mental Health and Learning Disabilities) per year

This above data provides us with the evidence base to move forward with our plans for different types of accommodation.

### **Opportunities: Strategic Partnerships**

As with general needs housing the increased development strength of Strategic Partners presents an opportunity for the Council in conjunction with Registered Providers to secure a wider range of house types on all affordable sites including importantly a provision for specialist housing types.

This is already evident in the district where we have developed and let our first two Dementia Friendly bungalows on an all affordable site and are progressing with plans for two further standalone dementia friendly bungalows on a small council owned parcel of land. Both in conjunction with our stock transfer partner EMH Homes.

### **Opportunities: Additional Homes England Grant Funding**

One of the key areas of provision that we lack is specific accommodation for homeless individuals and households with complex needs. During the Covid-19 pandemic additional funding streams have been announced for this cohort. One of our ambitions is to establish several units to become 'Housing First' units. Housing First is a pioneering approach to homelessness which follows a different resident journey to traditional routes to securing accommodation. Homeless individuals are placed in accommodation 'first' without having to wait or go through the usual application process. It is at this point that support services and packages are built around them at home. This approach has shown promising results in other parts of the country and internationally. We will also actively seek to take advantage of the additional

funding provided by government for homeless households through collaborative work with our neighbouring Districts and Boroughs.

### **Opportunities: Lubbethorpe SUE and Whetstone Pastures Garden Village**

The scale of delivery on large sites gives us an opportunity to provide significant levels of affordable housing in the future. This scale also allows the scope to deliver specialist housing projects that would not be viable on smaller land led developments. It is recognised that older persons accommodation needs to be fully integrated into communities and not left in isolation on the edge of conurbations. This is particularly relevant for Extra Care Schemes. Because these sites are effectively designing communities from scratch, they can provide the optimum locations for specialist housing.

### **Opportunities: Multi Agency Co-operation**

As well as our strategic partners we are keen to develop partnerships with others and have begun to develop proposals with a third sector charitable organisation for the provision of specialist housing for those with Mental Health difficulties. We will continue to be open to different ways of working and embrace new partnership opportunities and also be flexible to address the need for specialist accommodation when and where opportunities arise from a strategic and planning perspective.

### **Opportunities: Lightbulb Project**

As the host Authority, Blaby District Council plays a lead role in the delivery of the Lightbulb Project. The project is a collaboration between Leicestershire

County Council, district councils, local Clinical Commissioning Groups, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust to better deliver a range of adaptation and support services. This enables residents to remain in their current home and reduces the need for care home placements and longer than necessary hospital stays.

This help includes .....

- Housing MOT's
- Equipment provision and installation (such as a shower chair or perching stool)
- Minor adaptations (such as a half-step or grab rails)
- Assistive Technology
- Warm homes and energy advice
- Home safety checks
- Major adaptations (such as installing a stairlift or level access shower)
- Future housing needs and options
- Home repairs or improvement

In addition to the adaptation and home improvement services the Lightbulb project also includes the Hospital Housing Enablement Team. This team are empowered to make decisions across County, City, and District boundaries, access funds and offer ongoing support to patients moving back to their home, or a more suitable new home.



### What are we going to do?

- Continue working collaboratively with housing providers and developers to bring forward more homes for vulnerable people that offer a range of housing options.
- Work closely with Leicestershire Child and Adult Social Services and Regional NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to develop a joint approach to need and supply
- Ensure there is a broad spectrum of housing solutions for Blaby's ageing population which minimise the need for costly residential and nursing care
- Internally we will work closely between departments to ensure that the long-term financial viability of the projects are clear
- Assess the impact of Specialist Housing on the surrounding communities
- Ensure that Specialist Housing Schemes are in the best possible location to maximise their function for the residents who live there

- Involve as many stakeholders as possible in discussions from the inception of any potential specialist development.
- Maximise opportunities to adapt homes occupied by vulnerable people and those with disabilities, to enable them to lead independent lives.
- Continue to look for better ways to assess and understand the needs of our residents
- To provide Supported Living to support those with physical and mental health problems
- Embrace opportunities on large scale developments for significant specialist housing (for example Extra Care Schemes)
- Work closely with Homes England to maximise funding opportunities for specific groups
- Continue to provide a range of adaptation services through the Lightbulb project to allow residents to remain in their own homes
- Through the Hospital Housing Enablement Team provide housing related solutions for individuals ready to be discharged from hospital
- We will refresh our existing Older Persons Housing Strategy



## 5. Strategic Priority 3 - Prevent Homelessness and end Rough Sleeping in the Blaby District

In April 2018, the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 came into force, bringing new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness, specifically:

- Prevent and relieve homelessness of all eligible applicants, regardless of priority need
- An extension of the 'threatened with homelessness' period from 28 to 56 days
- Duty to refer – public services will need to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone, they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

In 2020 the Council renewed its Homelessness Strategy and in doing so involved a significant range of Registered Providers, voluntary sector and other public service partners. The main priorities arising from the strategy are:

- 1) Preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation
- 2) Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- 3) Developing partnership work and wider communications to ensure efficient service user led provision
- 4) Supporting vulnerable households to be independent and self-reliant

The Council has also responded to the implications of the HRA by reviewing its housing services. Additional resource has been added to the team and a triage service has been introduced which ensures that everyone who contacts us

gets the right help at the right time. This includes our tenancy sustainment service, whereby those that approach us due to having been threatened with eviction can be assisted with mediation between tenants and landlords as well as welfare benefit assistance and debt advice. We will continue to review these arrangements to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

Since the introduction of the HRA in April 2018 we have prevented 672 households from becoming homeless and have relieved homelessness in 487 cases. Our Tenancy Sustainment Officer post has proved to be very successful and this has certainly made a significant contribution to the prevention cases over the last couple of years.

More recently, as is the case with many local authorities, the Council has seen sharp increases in homelessness approaches as a result of Covid-19. This has had an impact on the number of people requiring temporary accommodation as a result of the national and local lockdowns as well as the governments initiative to bring all rough sleepers in off the street. Working with our Registered Provider partners we have been able to ensure that priority has been given to those most in need during this time, this has resulted in the numbers of placements in temporary accommodation being kept at a high but manageable level.

### Funding

Government funding was successfully awarded for the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and the Rough Sleepers Initiative, both of which assist with reducing the amount of people who are rough sleeping and for whom there are currently no other services available. The council will continue to utilise such



initiatives as well as the Next Steps Accommodation funding which was awarded as a result of households being stuck in temporary accommodation following the 'everyone in' instruction during the on-going Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 outlines in detail the steps that we will take to fulfil our vision of preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in our District, the following is a summary of those actions:

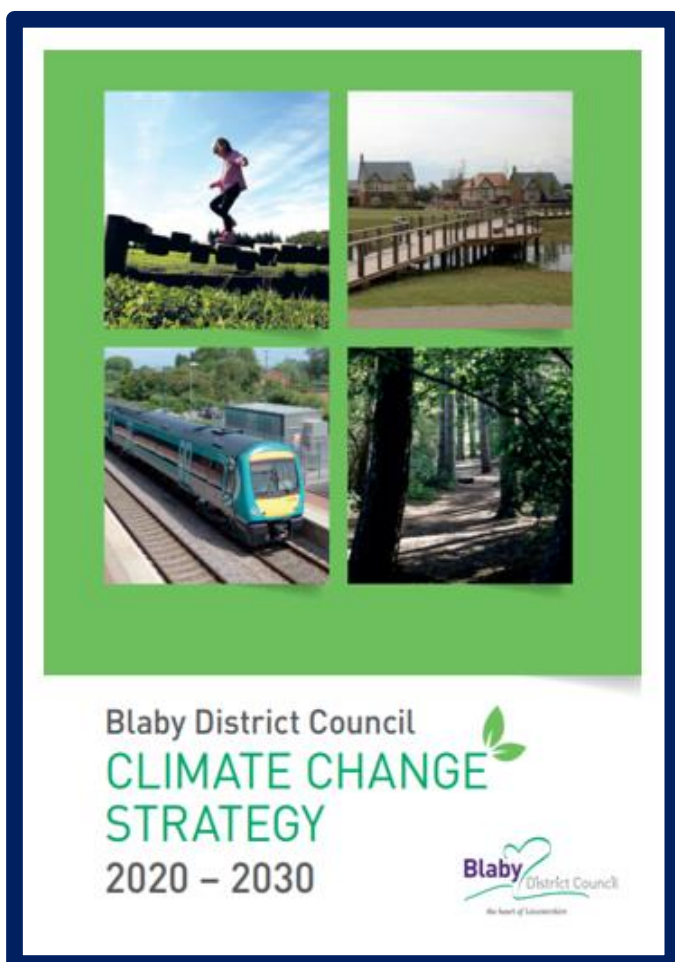
### What are we going to do?

- Continue to make effective use of discretionary housing payments
  - Be creative and innovative in finding solutions to prevent homelessness
  - Maximise funding opportunities such as the Rapid Rehousing Pathway, the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the Next Steps Accommodation Programme
  - Work towards reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by exploring alternative options for homeless households, for example, through the use of our own lease properties
  - Maximise the number of affordable homes built
  - Develop an offer to private sector landlords that is robust, competitive and suitable
  - Pursue cross authority projects with a view to providing appropriate accommodation for homeless households
- Work with partners to address the gap in the provision of support and to minimise the impact of welfare reform
  - Enable vulnerable households to access our Tenancy Sustainment Officer and / or Resident Support team to help sustain tenancies
  - Work with active Registered Providers to deliver new supported accommodation for vulnerable households
  - Build on relationships with adult and children's services to increase support and appropriate accommodation options



## 6. Strategic Priority 4 - To minimise the environmental impact of the existing housing stock and future housing development.

The UK has set in law a target to bring all its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. To achieve this target, the government's ambition is to improve the energy efficiency of homes and move to cleaner ways of heating homes in order to halve the energy use of new buildings by the end of this decade.



In 2020 Blaby District Council approved its Climate Change Strategy which outlines our aim to meet the Government's carbon neutral targets.

There are six aims of the strategy:

1. **CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and the impact of climate change**
2. **Protecting the environment**
3. **Travel and Transport**
4. **Waste and Resources – Moving to a circular economy**
5. **Sustainable communities**
6. **Behaviour Change and Education**

As housing contributes to around one fifth of all carbon emissions nationally, the UK (including the District of Blaby) will only achieve this net zero ambition if we decarbonise our existing homes and ensure that new homes are built to much higher environmental standards.

Decarbonisation is key to tackling climate change and hitting the net zero carbon emission targets by 2050, whilst retrofitting homes also offers major benefits for residents and communities. These benefits include tackling fuel poverty and addressing rising energy bills, whilst helping to prevent vulnerable residents from living in dangerously cold homes. These improvements alone will contribute to reducing pressure on our health and social services whilst also creating high-skilled and high-quality local jobs.

In the housing sector, achieving net zero carbon by 2050 means:

- Building new homes that are net zero carbon and if possible that actually generate energy (e.g. for electric vehicles)
- Retrofitting existing homes to raise their energy efficiency and make their power and heating sources renewable

As a stepping stone to the Governments 2050 deadline the housing sector also has its own specific targets, these being:

- All fuel poor homes in the social housing sector to be upgraded to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C by 2030
- As many homes as possible to be EPC Band C by 2035 where practical, cost-effective and affordable.

## Delivering Low Carbon Homes

There is no doubt that insulated, energy efficient homes will be warmer with lower fuel bills and also healthier to live in. However, achieving the carbon neutral targets across the Districts 40,000 existing homes by 2050 as well as all new homes built by 2025 will require a dynamic approach that assesses, supports production of and embeds new technologies as they emerge.

The Government has asked social landlords to be the “flag bearer” for energy efficiency and there is real enthusiasm in the sector to achieve this. However, this enthusiasm will need to be supported with adequate public and private subsidy for our Registered Provider Partners, otherwise there is a real danger that the redirection of current funds will lead to them becoming uncompetitive in the land market and able to secure fewer sites resulting in less affordable housing.

Given the extent of the shortfall of affordable homes in the Blaby District, any actions that would reduce affordable housing supply would be difficult to justify.

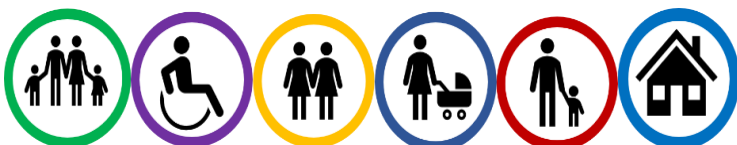
## Energy White Paper 2020



More recently several key housing announcements have been made in the Governments Energy White Paper which was published in December 2020.

The white paper sets out concrete actions to reduce how much energy we use and to support the move to low-carbon heat. Key points for the housing sector include:

- The new “Future Homes Standard” which will require new-build homes to be fitted with low-carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. Homes built to the standard will have 75 to 80 per cent lower carbon emissions than those built to current standards.
- Government will work with the building industry to incorporate smart technologies such as heating controls into the methodology for assessing the energy performance



of homes in a bid to avoid the need for costly retrofit measures where possible.

- A Government commitment to consulting on mitigating overheating risk in new homes and a range of methods are to be considered to demonstrate compliance with new requirements.
- £50m of funding to support the delivery of upgrading existing homes to meet EPC band C.
- Action to improve energy efficiency of homes in the private rented sector (PRS), using recommendations from a consultation on proposals for an estimated 2.8 million PRS homes to meet a minimum energy performance standard of EPC Band C by 2028, where practical, cost-effective and affordable.

The white paper also promises a roadmap of the Future Homes Standard in early 2021. A dedicated Heat and Buildings Strategy is also due for release in 2021 which will set out these ambitious plans in further detail. Alongside a package of incentives, Government plans to create a long-term regulatory framework to improve the energy performance of homes and will be consulting on the options for these measures in 2021.

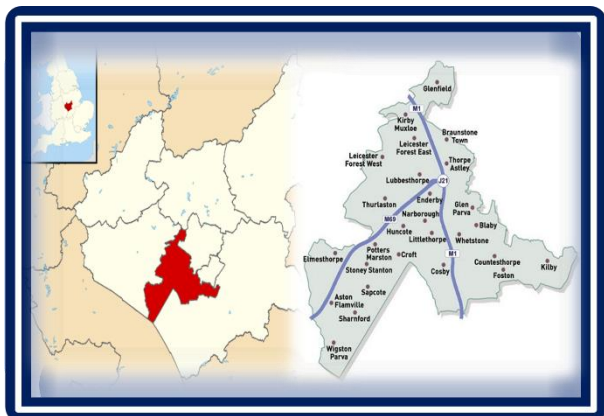
### What are we going to do?

- Protect and maximise the natural environment
- Explore opportunities with our Registered Provider Partners to bring forward and encourage the use of modern methods of construction

- Work with Registered Providers to utilise future Government funding for retrofitting existing social rented homes
- Contribute to sustainable and resilient communities
- Work in partnership with the Councils Environmental Services department in order to achieve the housing related ambitions of the Climate Change Strategy 2020
- Boost the economy and create jobs
- Reduce pressure on the NHS by improving dangerously cold homes
- Work with Registered Providers and housebuilders to establish and commit to minimum environmental standards



## 6. Appendix A: Blaby Profile

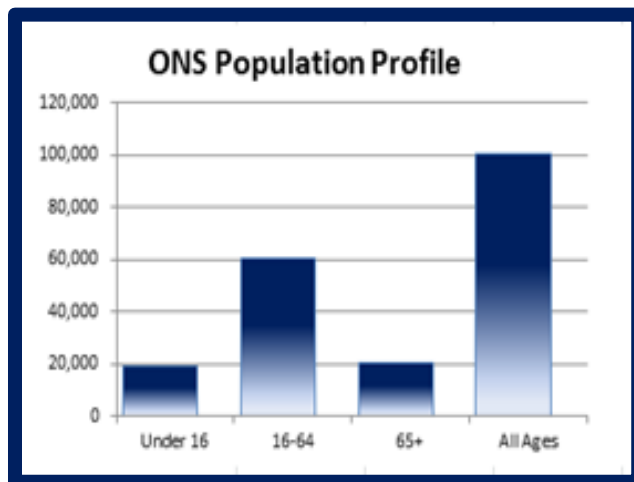


The District of Blaby covers 80 square miles and is a mix of both urban areas in the north and rural areas in the south. Blaby is well linked to major transport networks by both the M1 and M69 motorways. There are direct train routes to Leicester and Birmingham and two international airports (Birmingham and East Midlands Airport are located within a 30-minute drive away)

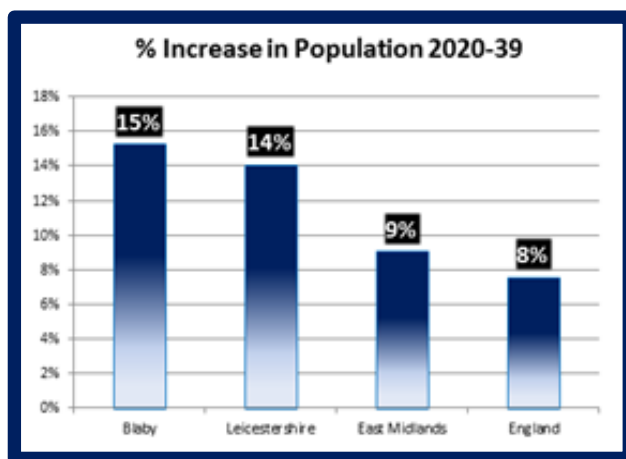
### Population Demographics

The Office of National Statistics most recent estimate puts the population of Blaby as 100,421 people. This represents a growth of 6.7% since the last Census in 2011.

ONS Population profile (2018)	Population	% of population
Under 16	19,066	19.00
16-64	60,965	61.00
65+	20,390	20.00
All Ages	100,421	1.00



Using the same 2018 ONS data the population in Blaby is predicted to increase by 15% in the next 20-year period. This is a slightly larger increase than Leicestershire as a whole and significantly higher when compared regionally and nationally.



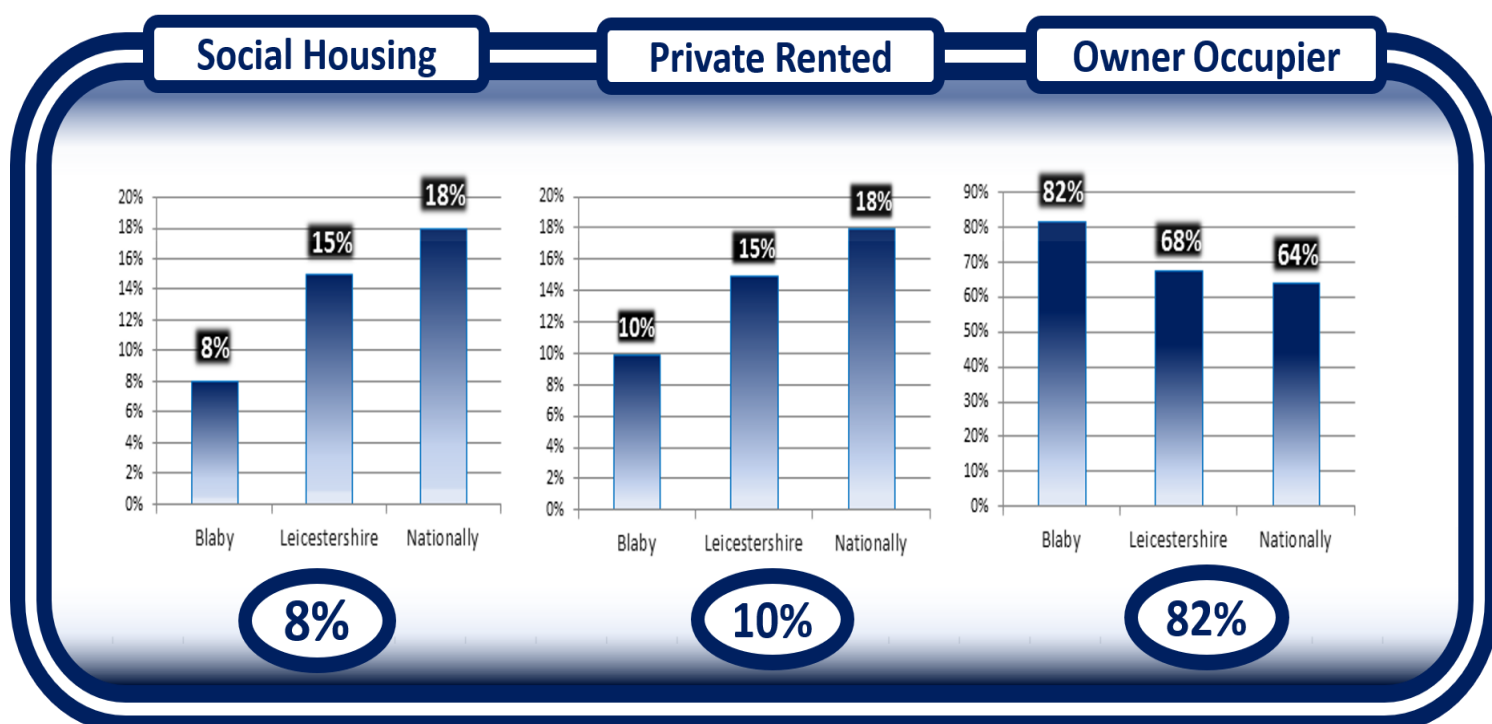
When breaking down the increase to age groups the over 65 age range represents 50% of the total increase but also a significant increase of 38% within that single age bracket. This is a far greater increase than the other two groups and indicates a higher than average ageing population.

## Housing Stock

House type % by Bedroom Number: Blaby Vs National

Housing Stock	Blaby	Nationally
1 Bedroom	5%	12%
2 Bedroom	21%	27%
3 Bedroom	51%	41%
4+ Bedroom	23%	20%

- Blaby’s Housing Stock is heavily weighted towards larger 3 and 4 bedroom homes making a total of 74%, higher than the national average of 69%
- Smaller homes are critical for the majority of First Time Buyers
- Smaller homes are also important for those wishing to downsize
- 82% of all homes are owner occupier. This is higher than both the Leicestershire and National average
- At 8% we have a significantly small provision of affordable housing compared to the Leicestershire and National average which are both over 16%
- The private rented sector (PRS) accounts for 10% of all households in Blaby against a national average of 17%.
- Across all tenures there is a clear disparity which negatively effects those who need all types of affordable housing



## Affordable Housing Stock

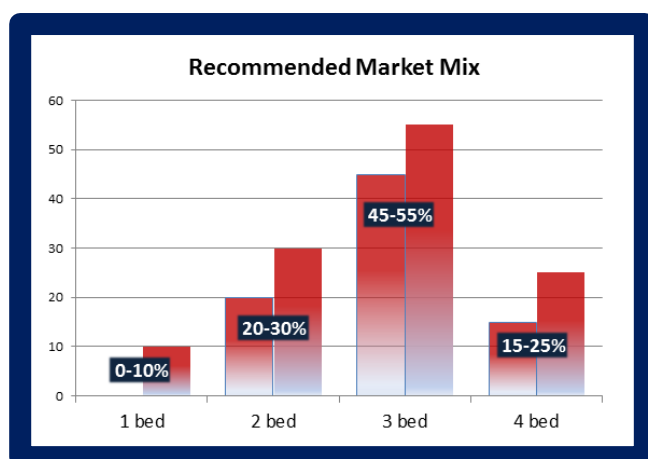
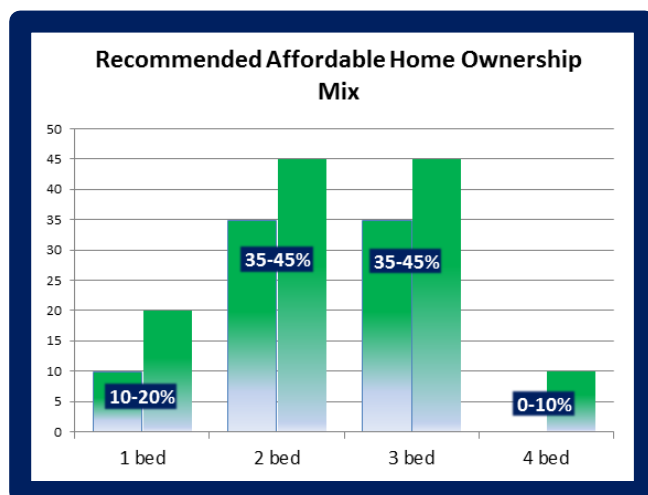
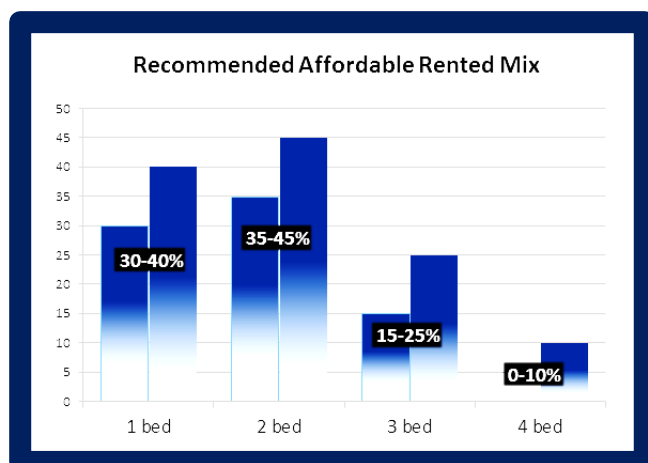
Focussing solely on our affordable housing stock profile and bed size it should be noted we have a higher than average prevalence of one and two bedroom units. This is unsurprising given our over representation of larger homes within other tenures. It should also be recognised that approximately 70% of the one bed stock in the district is only suitable for older people, as is between 40 - 50% of the two-bed stock. It is currently our ambition for older person's accommodation to have two bedrooms (in order for family members or carers to stay overnight if needed). Subsequently a lot of the older one bed stock is not popular with residents.

## Market Housing Stock

Market housing stock, as previously mentioned, forms the majority of the housing infrastructure in Blaby District. As well as accounting for 82% of the entire stock of housing 81% of the Market stock is 3 and 4 bed plus housing. This shows a clear lack of smaller family homes for those wishing to get on the housing ladder.

## Suggested Housing Mix

Taking into account the current need and housing stock, our Blaby Housing Needs Assessment has also provided us with a guide to the housing mix we should be seeking on new build developments which is demonstrated in the "Recommended Market Mix" table.



## The Blaby Economy

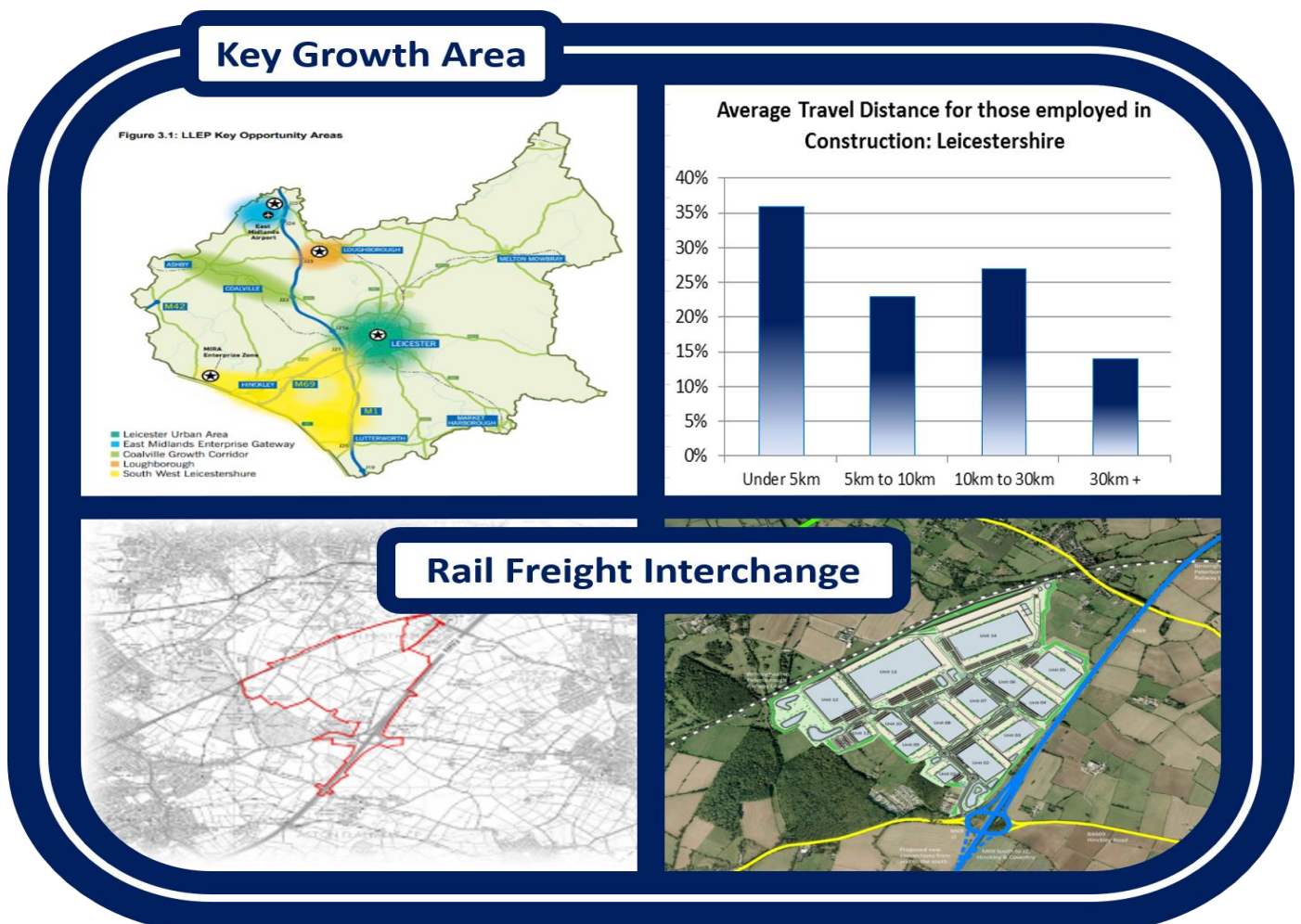
Economically the District is relatively successful, this is demonstrated by having a marginally higher employment rate when compared regionally and nationally (38% against 35%) and subsequently a lower unemployment rate (approximately 3% against approximately 5% regionally and nationally).

Economic prosperity and development are also key drivers in housing need growth. Parts of Blaby District are recognised as Key Opportunity Areas for economic growth identified by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).

The largest potential for economic development is the National Infrastructure Rail Freight Interchange. If approved the development would deliver significant employment opportunities (an estimated 260 Full Time Employment positions per annum over the 11-year construction phase).

The project is currently estimated to start in 2022 (within the time scale of this strategy).

The Census 2011 calculated that approximately 50% of construction workers in Leicestershire work within 10km of their workplace so it is reasonable to suggest large construction projects such as those listed would both guarantee jobs but also have an impact on housing need and demand.

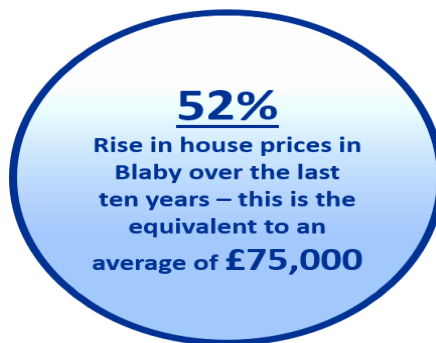
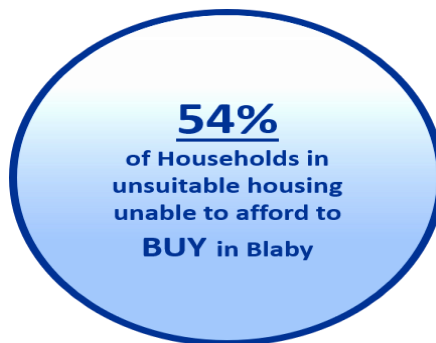
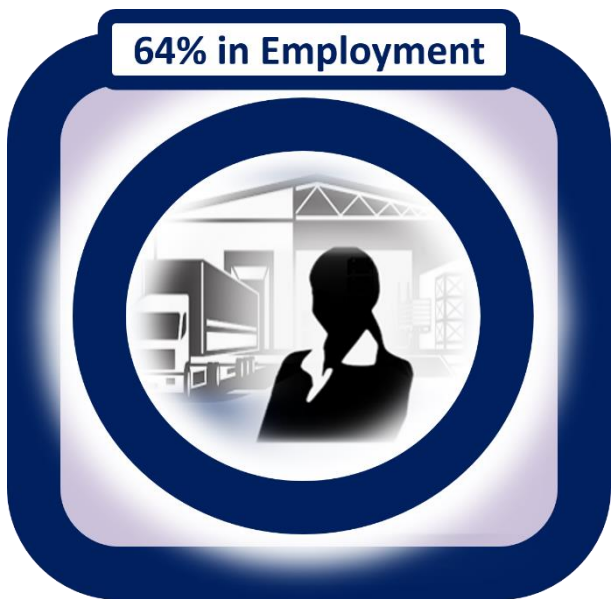




Complementing the potential for economic growth is Blaby’s already strong employment figures. 64% of our population are in paid employment. This compares favourably with Leicestershire as a whole (58%) and Nationally (59%). The average wage of those employed is also slightly higher than the regional average, £32,500 in Blaby against £31,400 for Leicestershire.

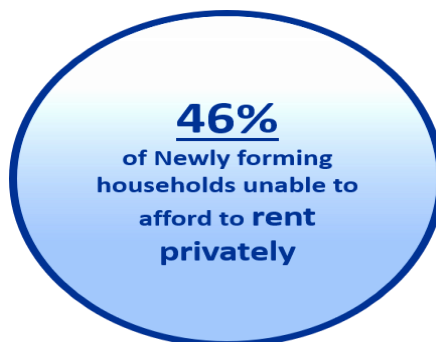
## Key Figures from the Housing Economy

Whilst a strong economy and higher than average wages are good for the district, it does mean those who fall below these earnings levels are increasingly priced out of the housing market. We can see this in the figures below.



**Potential Economic Growth Opportunities**

- Rail Freight Interchange
- Optimus Point
- Castle Acres Expansion
- New Everards Brewery
- Lubbesthorpe SUE
- Whetstone Pastures
- Garden Village



## 7. Appendix B: National Policy Context

Since our last strategy which was adopted in 2015 there have been a raft of new national policies and initiatives aimed at combatting the well documented national housing and homelessness challenges.

### Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken housing Market

Published in 2017 the white paper re-affirmed the Governments 2015 commitment to *“build a million new homes by 2020 and supply a further half a million by 2022”*

The paper identified three challenges:

- Council’s lacking an up-to-date adopted Local Plan that reflected future population growth.
- The slow pace of new development.
- The structure of the current housing market making it harder to increase supply.

Four key aims were highlighted

- planning for the right homes in the right places,
- build homes faster,
- diversify the housing market, and
- helping people now.

Key targets also included *“supporting people to buy or rent their own home, preventing homelessness, improving options for older people and protecting the most vulnerable.”* And encouraging Councils to be *‘as ambitious and*

*innovative as possible to get homes built in their area.’*

### National Planning Policy Framework

Following the Housing White Paper, the NPPF has undergone two updates in 2018 and 2019. The most notable addition in Housing terms is the inclusion of Starter Homes and other housing for Discounted Market Sale within the traditional definition of Affordable Housing.



## Homes England Re-brand and Re-Focus

The rebranding of the Homes and Communities Agency, now called Homes England, incorporated the introduction of strategic partnerships (covered in more detail below) and a renewed drive on unlocking difficult to develop sites with an increasing interventionist approach into the market.

The latest Homes England Strategy was published in 2018 (running until 2023) and follows these seven guiding principles

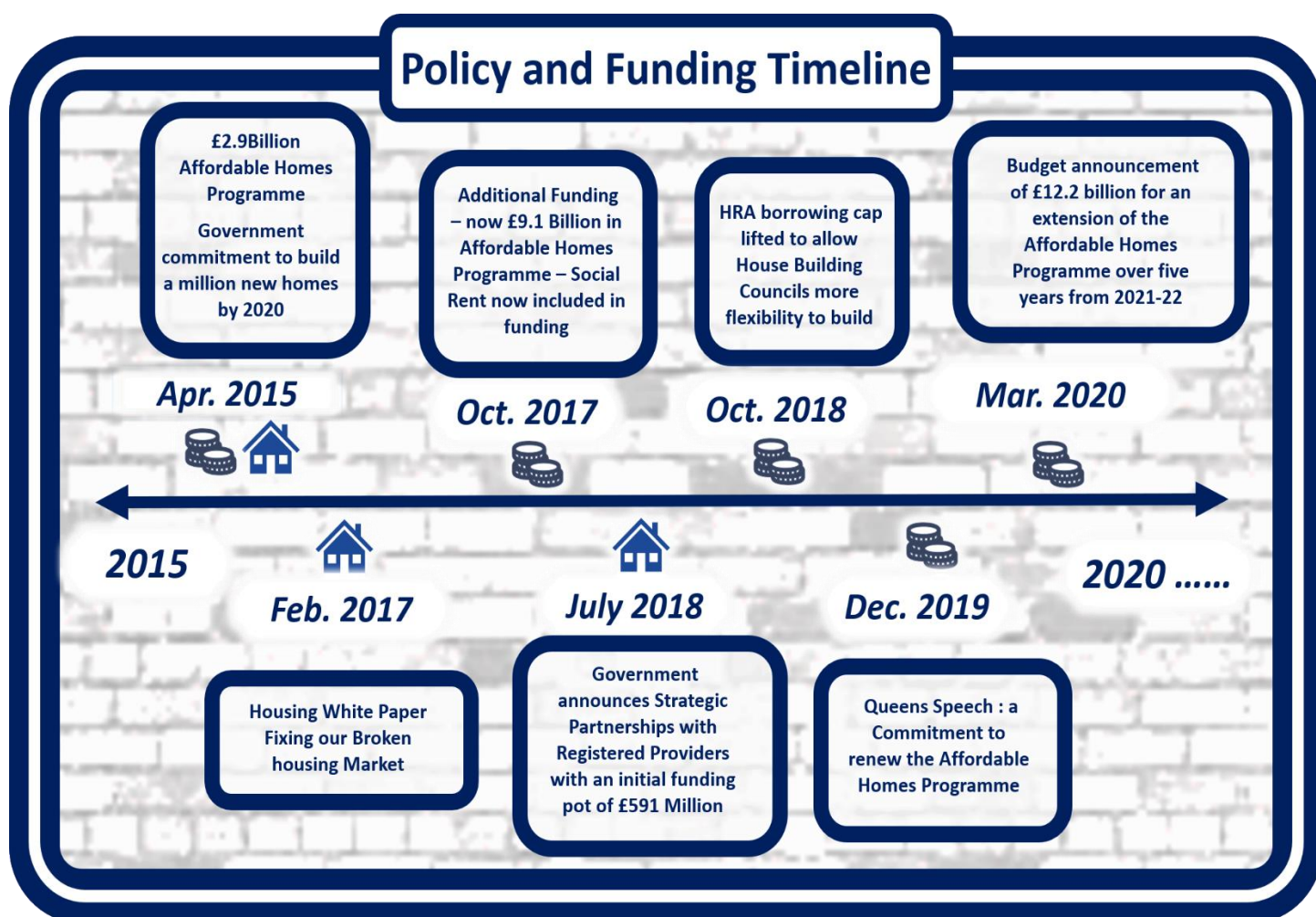


## Affordable Homes Programme / Strategic Partnerships

The renewed policy commitments of Government have been matched by substantial monetary investment in affordable housing through Homes England's Affordable Homes Programme with a steady flow of funding announcements over the past five years.

The introduction of Strategic Partnerships between Registered Providers and Homes England has been an important innovation. Strategic Partnership status allows Registered Providers to be awarded Homes England grant up front giving them the freedom to flesh out the schemes later depending on the specific needs of each site.

Our Stock transfer partner, EMH Homes, has been awarded Strategic Partnership status as have 5 other major Registered Providers who are active in our district. In the case of EMH homes, being a Strategic Partner has allowed them to predict an 80% increase in development for affordable homes compared to their development plan under the previous grant scheme. As a result, we have already seen an increase in our pipeline for 100% all affordable sites.



## Planning for The Future White Paper: Consultation

At the time of writing this strategy the government has published a consultation on further significant changes to the planning system. Whilst not law and only at the beginning of the process to become so, the proposed changes to the planning system are worth noting as an indicator as to where the Government focus is heading. This renewed focus includes designing beautiful places through the development of local design codes; however, the majority of proposals are seemingly designed to simplify and speed up development.

For example, the paper seeks to simplify Local Authority Local Plans and reduce the time it allows for them to be updated from 7 years to 30 months.

The proposals also seek to streamline the designation of land uses, the three new designations proposed are ...

- Growth: Areas suitable for substantial development where automatic outline approval would be granted
- Renewal: Areas suitable for some development
- Protected Areas: Development is restricted

It is also proposed that S106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy be replaced by an overarching National Infrastructure Levy with Local Authorities given the freedom to spend this obligation how they see fit.

The proposals also include the introduction of a new type of affordable

tenure, "First Homes". A First Home is a property sold with a 30% or more discount against Open Market Value in perpetuity. It is proposed that this tenure account for 25% of any affordable housing obligation on all major housing schemes.

Should the consultation progress and become law it will present significant challenges in terms of affordable housing delivery and there is the potential that we will need to make relevant adjustments to our current policies at that time.

## Social Housing Green Paper

In the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster the Government committed to a review of Social Housing. Published in August 2018 the paper put forward a proposed 'new deal for Social Housing'. Concrete policy commitments are yet to be established; however, the aims of the review have a focus on:

- Decent homes
- improving tenant complaints resolution
- Empowering residents
- Tackle stigma
- Strengthening regulation
- Supporting community and home ownership

The council will monitor whether any of these proposed measures are implemented and respond accordingly along with our Registered Provider Partners.

## Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

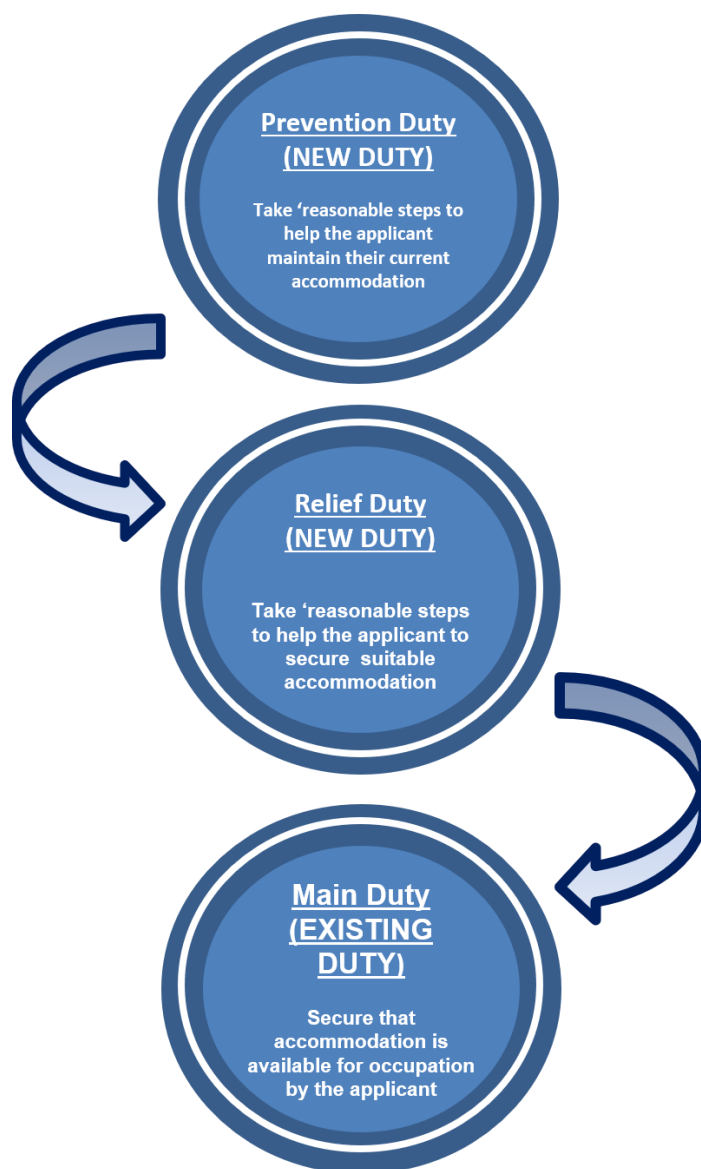
The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) represented the single biggest change in homelessness legislation and practice for 15 years.

The HRA introduced a large number of new duties emphasising a proactive but also vastly more inclusive preventative approach. These included:

- A new duty to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants even if they are not in priority need or are internationally homeless
- An extension of the period that a person is regarded as threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days.
- A new requirement to carry out an assessment of circumstances and to produce personalised housing plans with all eligible applicants
- Specified public bodies now have a new duty called “Duty to Refer” which requires them to refer people to the Local Authority whom they know are homeless or are threatened with homelessness.
- A “duty to cooperate” requires applicants to take reasonable steps to resolve their own homelessness

In practice this has meant a large increase in the number of people eligible for assistance, this can be both from within each Local Authority but also for those applicants who choose to approach a Local Authority other than their own in the prevention stage of the duties.

The additional duties have also presented a much more extensive administration burden on Local Authority Homelessness services due to the increased complexity of the regulations and the expanded review mechanism for applicants wishing to challenge decisions.



## Achievements 2015 – 2020

We have reflected on our achievements since the adoption of the last strategy, these are listed below:

Continued work with Registered Provider Partners to increase the supply of affordable homes within the District

Work with developers to ensure housing supply meets the requirements of the District

Formed an internal affordable housing group which includes the group managers for housing and planning with a remit to assist affordable housing delivery

Acquired new FFP housing jigsaw system

Adopted Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025

Introduced self-contained lease properties in partnership with emh homes for homeless families

All affordable scheme at Winchester Road, Blaby

4 new social rented bungalows for households with sight impairments at Braunstone Town

Sale of council owned depot site for an all affordable homes scheme in Littlethorpe

Engagement with Private Rented Sector landlords through joint housing forums with neighbouring local authorities

50 unit extra care scheme in Blaby

649 new affordable homes delivered since 2015

2 new affordable dementia friendly bungalows

All affordable scheme at Warwick Road, Littlethorpe

32 Unit Cosby Rural Exception site

Croft Rural Exception Site (phase 2)

Revised our Housing Allocations Policy in 2019 to align with the Homelessness Reduction Act

Produced an 'Out of Area' policy for homeless households placed outside of the District

Completed NPSS strategic review

Contributed £712,000 towards affordable housing delivery in the District

Recruited a tenancy sustainment officer to support households in new and existing tenancies

3 Successful Housing Conferences 2015, 2017, 2019